

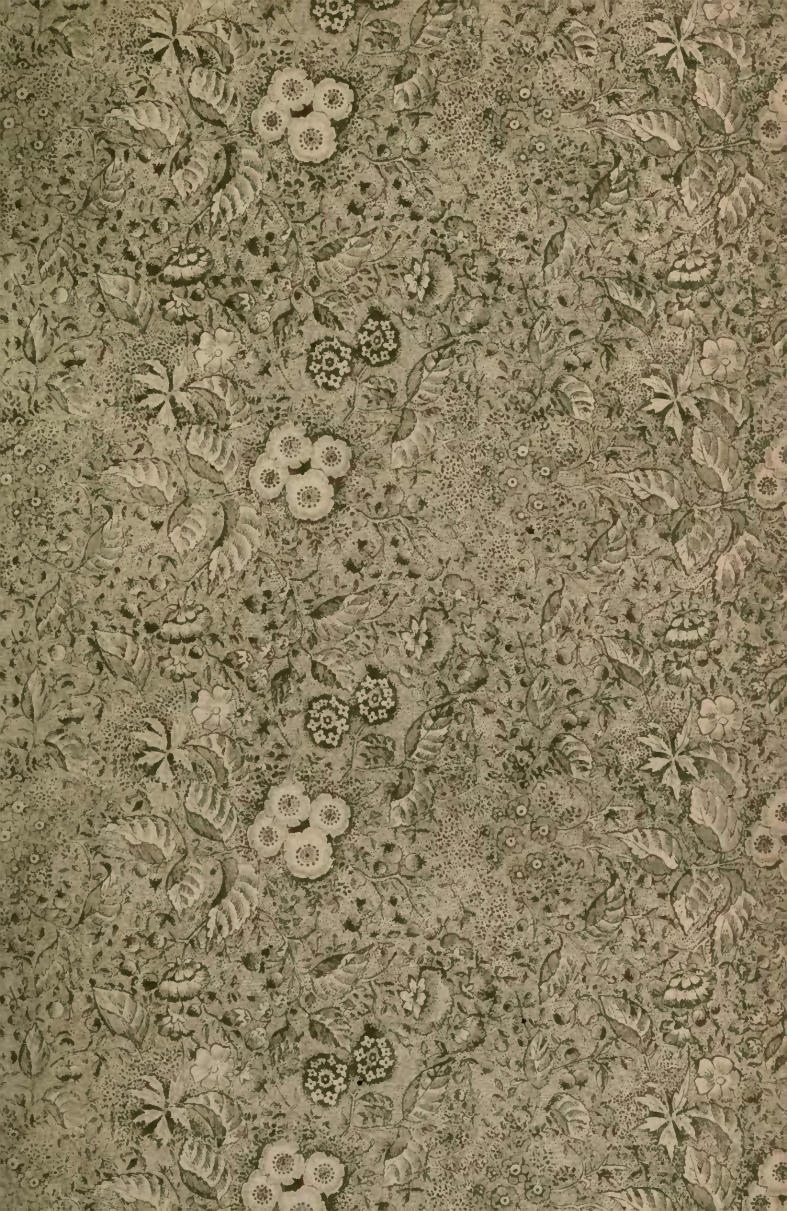
·HALF MARRIED·



·ANNIE·BLISS·M^CCONNELL·



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NEW YORK N Y





HALF MARRIED.

AGAMÉ GAMÉ.

BY

ANNIE BLISS McCONNELL.

Pet. Unde nobis, Gabriel, tam tetrica fronte?

Gab. Imo a nuptiis!

ERASMUS, *Col.*

"Always there is a black spot in our sunshine; it is even the shadow of ourselves."—CARLYLE.

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HALF MARRIED.

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CHAPTER I.

GENERAL LANSING was a "West Pointer" of the old school. Tall, straight, rigidly genial, he never omitted a military duty, never shirked a social obligation, and never, where health and civilization permitted, failed to attend service once on Sunday.

Having been born and bred among soldiers, his whole life was made up of what he considered duties; and from the time he was a cadet he would as soon have slept on watch as have left unreturned a "first call" longer than the conventional three days.

He was as careful about small duties as great ones, and, of course, this trait in his character made him a strict disciplinarian. But being as

severe with himself as with those under him, and having too much soldierly self-control to ever lose command of himself, he was in no sense of the word a martinet. Still, he certainly was not only a terror to evil-doers, but to those who did what they ought to do in a careless or inefficient manner. His wife, whom he loved with little demonstration but very dearly, was from a border State. She died from care and anxiety, caused by the unhappy political divisions in her own family, during the first year of the late war, leaving one daughter, Bessie, eleven years old.

The general—not a general then—submitted calmly to the cruel blow as coming from the “Great Headquarters,” and bowed his head quietly and resignedly to the inevitable orders of Providence.

After this his one great hope in life was, after the war, to get back to his little daughter. All his thoughts, his very existence was now centred in her; his one dream was her companionship and her improvement.

After her mother's death Bessie was sent off hurriedly to boarding-school, and was desolate enough, poor child. For three years she never

saw her father, but with aching heart and burning brain she followed the movements of the army.

Thus made old for her years, she was at fourteen a woman grown. Taller than the companions of her own age, ahead of them in their classes, and inheriting to some extent the self-control of two generations of soldiers, she found herself in some ways different from her classmates and rather alone. The scholars looked up to her with that mysterious awe with which young girls, even very little girls, regard the "motherless ones," as something unnatural, something to be respectfully regarded and respectfully pitied. Yes, they pitied her, though she stood high in her classes, had a general for a papa, and had more spending money than even the "older girls."

The infrequency of her letters struck them as a great misfortune. They would read in groups their delicately-written and frequent missives from "mamma" or sister, while Bessie would receive, as it seemed to them, only occasionally a large military-looking envelope, with "Headquarters So and So" printed on the left corner. It looked very imposing to those young girls, but also very sad.

At the end of the war General Lansing went North to fetch his daughter, and was astonished and almost frightened to find instead of the little child of his dreams a young girl, almost a young lady.

Very soon he was ordered to the frontier. He gave Bessie a truthful picture of the inconveniences and trials she undoubtedly would encounter if she came with him, and told her that she could come or remain at school, just as she preferred. She unhesitatingly told him she would never, never let him go without her, and she believed she would go with him even if he said she shouldn't.

The general, poor lonely man, was happier over this little bit of insubordination than he had been over anything for many years.

The idea had for some time haunted him that, perhaps, during the years of separation his little girl had almost forgotten, or at least ceased to love him; from this time he lovingly recognized her as her mother's own daughter.

Thus her decision was made, and she spent five years as her father's constant companion, except upon the few occasions when his duty was too

arduous and exposing, at which time she had some experience of life in cities.

In many ways he brought her up more like a son than a daughter. Not wishing her education to suffer from his selfishness in having her with him, in spite of many wanderings and circumstances most unfavorable to the acquisition of "book-learning," he kept her at mathematics, which she despised, French and German, which she liked, history and literature, which she adored.

He himself taught her to ride, to swim, and to shoot at a mark, but most carefully suppressed any tendency to rowdyism that this *régime* might induce.

At nineteen she could ride as long and come out as fresh as any officer in the service. She had camped out many times with her father. Once she had spent six months in the Sierra Nevadas, the only woman in a party of forty officers and civil engineers.

She boasted that her health was so perfect that she had never on that or any account caused a moment's delay in any expedition, that she could cook a good dinner over a camp-fire, if necessary saddle her own horse, and could

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start for any place with her father at five minutes' notice.

Her wandering life had given her little opportunity to make girl friends. One indeed she had,—one of the "old girls" in school.

This sage was six years the senior of our heroine. Seventeen viewed from the stand-point of eleven looks Egyptian in its antiquity. Though their correspondence was regular, the girls had not met since Mamie left the "Institute" with her blue-ribboned diploma. At twenty she had married a young clergyman, and was living in Carington, Connecticut. Thus it seemed improbable that the school-mates would ever meet again, and Bessie's experience of women as intimates was necessarily a limited one.

It certainly was not to her credit, but in women she did not find much that was amusing. They had headaches and other aches, and could not ride ten miles without giving out. She had never forgiven a little goose of a woman who had caused an entire riding-party to turn back and lose their whole day's pleasure. Bessie said she ought to have gone on "if it killed her." Indeed, that phrase "to go on if it killed"

was consistently lived up to by both father and daughter.

She really believed in her heart of hearts that she would rather "fight Indians" than sit all day over a long needle and say "one, two, three, four" at it. One day of such work would surely drive her mad. Yet she sometimes felt in an indefinite way that she was inferior to those beings, tame and uninteresting as they were to her.

Men she simply looked upon as companions; their devotion and admiration were lost on her, and love-making she deliberately laughed at. When a girl deliberately laughs at being made love to, there is something radically wrong in her make-up. Did not the great race of antiquity say that the rational soul entered the male body at the age of twelve? And did not the soul of Mahomet wait, confined in an ugly earthen pot shaped like a rimless old-fashioned beaver hat, from the creation until the fifth century for a body fit to receive it? So I fear our heroine's soul was "unaccountably delayed," or perhaps only needed a touch of a spark divine to summon it into its proper habitation. Be that as it may, she certainly found it

more agreeable to have pistol practice with the handsome new major than to sit and "work" with the captain's pretty little wife. But it was the shooting that was the attraction, and had the major taken to the "distaff" and the little lady to fire-arms, Bessie would still have followed the fire-arms.

That she was considered somewhat cold and indifferent she knew, and spending much of her time alone, she had plenty of leisure to wonder vaguely what the trouble could be. She knew surely that she was not indifferent to her father, and that they had full confidence and trust in each other, yet she knew as well that she would no more have confided her thoughts and feelings to him than to the Articles of War on the library shelf.

When these reveries became too depressing she had her horse brought round, took a gallop, thought if her mother were with her she and things generally would be much better and more understandable.

In boyhood and girlhood, when the affections have not their ordinary and natural outlet the effect on the disposition and countenance in a short time is very marked. Instinctively children

are afraid of being misunderstood and laughed at; and when this fear preponderates over their in-born cravings for attention and confidence, their impulses and quick emotions are either rendered sluggish or destroyed entirely. In regarding the faces of the children in an "institution," no matter how kindly they are cared for, the suppressed expression of both large and small touches the heart quicker than the cold hands and ragged clothing of the street gamin. Bessie's peculiar life had developed that pre-eminently American trait, adaptability, in a high degree. She solemnly averred that her home was where her father—and her tooth-brush—happened to be. Her great characteristic was love of the truth, and with the uncompromising cruelty of youth, anything approaching deception found from her no quarter. In her make-up of vigorous and decided convictions there was no city of refuge for such offenders. Upon one occasion, after commenting upon one of those little unpleasantnesses that occur even in the best regulated garrisons, the fort chaplain gently remonstrated with her: "Miss Bessie, you are too severe; it is sometimes hard for even the best and strongest of us to be perfectly, nobly

honest. You are always courteous, cannot you be also pitiful?"

"Yes, sir; I'll try." And she walked off, wondering if she could ever forgive a lie, or in any circumstances be guilty of one herself.

After this short sketch of father and daughter, we will let Bessie herself describe some of her adventures and surroundings.

"FORT DERBY, Nov. 20, 187-.

"DEAR MAMIE,—

"We have only been back to what *we* consider civilization a couple of weeks. We were in camp in the Rockies, you know, and strange adventures have we had. One day Lieutenant Arthur, a young friend of ours, brought me in a wild-cat—a kitten, rather—that he shot three miles from camp.

"For three mortal hours did he, Brown (one of the soldiers), and I toil over that kitten. Finally, behold him! skinned, stuffed, and lying down to sleep so naturally on a board with hair-pins to hold his legs in place. We put him outside of papa's tent to dry, and as it was near night, calmly, nay, even triumphantly, went to our repose, conscious of a good deed done.

"In the morning I looked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again. Where was that kitten? had he deliberately walked off, feeling as he looked, as good as new? No, it could not be. As soon as Mr. Arthur made his appearance we examined the ground, and here and there in the snow saw soft tracks: his mother had scented him from afar and came and got him.

"It would have repaid me somewhat for losing the work of art if I could have seen that cat when she found her kitten was a snare and a delusion, a specious kitten of skin, cotton, salt, and borax. Wonder if she tore all her other kittens to pieces to see whether they were sinful frauds or not? However, if we lost the wild-cat, we found another cat; he was a most engaging little creature, would walk up softly and poke his nose in the tent door. We allowed him liberties of this kind rather than provoke him to wrath and retaliation. After duly inspecting us he took his final departure, much to our relief, as you may imagine.

"While we were living in tents the mercury was twenty below zero. Doesn't that beat Connecticut 'all hollow'?

"I love to write slang. Papa won't allow it at all; he says if the 'occasion demands it' I may say d—n,—as if I *ever* would,—but slang he *will not have*. Don't you wonder that I was not an icicle? The water in the tents froze, the medicines and kerosene likewise froze, and the guns were covered with frost. My bed in the corner was a parti-colored mass of blankets, quilts, etc., and I always slept with a bright red 'tam-o-shanter' hauled over my ears. I learned from a scout how to tan a deer-skin; in fact, I would make a good Indian, don't you think so?

"By the way, did you know that horses wore snow-shoes? They do; the 'shoes' are boards about an inch and a half thick and ten or twelve inches square,—a clamp fits over the hoof and keeps them in place. I never saw them before this last expedition. At first the poor beast appears about as comfortable as a pussy cat with newspaper stockings, but in an hour or two he becomes used to them, and gets along nicely; in fact, without them he would not get along at all. Think of it! I have had a pair of regular cavalry boots made; as they accommodate my feet and two pairs of heavy woollen stockings besides, you

may have some idea of their dimensions. Little Tom Campbell, aged ten, whom I taught to swim, sent me the cutest pair of spurs you ever saw; you see my roughest riding is done *à la Mexicaine*.

"My few trophies of this and other expeditions ornament my large but rather bare room,—it is over our parlor. We are fortunate in having a mansard-roof, so we get in that way an extra story.

"Please send me a dozen pairs of gloves when you ship our freight box,—you know the shades and styles, am sure I do not,—also a pair of two-buttoned eight and a quarter for a gentleman (I lost a bet), and a book with tales of blood and salt water for my youthful and only love, Tom.

"Write to me soon. Ever so much love from

"Your friend,

"BESSIE LANSING.

"P.S.—Most forgot to tell you that we are expecting a new officer, Charlie Waring. He graduated in June, and not very high either; his father was an officer too, and died in the war. 'They say' he is wild as a hawk, though not a bad

fellow, and has mysteriously gotten through with quite a sum of money,—gambling no doubt.

“I imagine he is sent here for my father to discipline and look after. Do you know anything about him? Think I’ll undertake some of the discipline and looking after myself; wouldn’t it be fun? B.”

CHAPTER II.

A FEW days after Bessie's letter was written the "youngster," Charles Waring, duly reported at headquarters; and that evening, arrayed in his uniform, which was still a novelty, he intended making his "social" call on the general.

He was twenty-three years old, and looked even younger. His eyes were perfectly blue,—that color which the learned in such matters say is gradually becoming extinct. His thick eyelashes curled upwards, and with his rather too heavy eyebrows, turning up curiously at the corners, gave him an expression of singular alertness. His mouth was rather large, with the lips sufficiently firm to counterbalance to some extent the rather infantile expression of the blue eyes and straight nose.

He had a trick rare among young people, of laughing with his mouth closed, and rarely showed a set of fine but not beautiful teeth. Gentlemen at that time had not adopted the prize-ring style

of wearing their hair, and his—since he left the Academy—was allowed to curl in rather crispy light rings.

When he suddenly lifted his cap, the natural color of his forehead was so much whiter than his face it almost surprised one into a laugh. Though shorter than the average, he was perfectly built, giving one that idea of activity and grace more usual in the sailor than in the soldier. His hands were unusually small, his feet phenomenally so, and, encased in the finest and most stylish of shoes, were his one vanity. A New York belle said, "Scrapes was suggested by every expression of his countenance and turn of his body as completely as if Charles Lever had manufactured him for a particular occasion."

Before starting on this formidable visit he wanted what he called "points," so he wouldn't put his foot in it. He had heard of Miss Lansing, and had come to the conclusion that he would try his hand—or rather his eyes and feet—at a flirtation. In fact, he had attended so assiduously to that branch of his education that he narrowly escaped being "found" in other more important directions.

He walked over to Lieutenant Arthur's quarters—who was two classes ahead of him—for the desired information.

"Arthur, I'm going to make my call on the general."

Arthur knew what he wanted, but answered with malicious gravity,—

"You will find him a delightful gentleman."

"Arthur, is Miss Lansing pretty?"

"Very."

"Stylish?"

"Depends whether she has on her cavalry boots and Major White's old forage-cap, or is gotten up like a civilized being."

"Bright?"

"Indeed she is, rather alarmingly so at times; a man that does not 'read' is an abomination in her eyes, and she never is at a loss for a reply."

Arthur saw he must proceed or be catechised, so he went on,—

"The old general gave a dinner-party last spring. The Bishop of Walla-Ha came here on a visitation. At the same time an old admiral drifted along from no one knows where; that's where they generally come from, I believe. At the dinner, as

is often the case, Miss Bessie was the only lady present; she often sits through the cigars and all, still as a mouse and taking in everything with the smoke.

“Finally, after some of the regulation toasts were drunk, Carsten here,—you remember him at the Point?—conceited jackanapes, for some remarkable reason only known to himself, perhaps he was a little muddled, proposed that Miss Lansing should give the next toast. Before the general or any of us had recovered from our surprise she rose from her chair, and, bowing first to the bishop and then to the admiral, said, ‘Gentlemen, here is to the Army’—a pause—‘of the Lord and the Navy of Uncle Sam!’ She retired immediately, having made the hit of the evening, and completely captivated the two honored guests. A professional diner-out couldn’t have done it more neatly. She is horribly severe, too, when occasion requires, and sometimes when it does not. Like her father, she is a stanch Episcopalian, and is quite capable of holding her own in an argument, though she never ‘talks religion.’ We had a call from a revivalist, and from some cause or other she went to hear him. Unfortunately for

him, he pitched into Churchmen right and left, and more than intimated that the amount of caloric laid up for us would cause the Yuma man to bring his fan and umbrella.

"A few days after, when a number of us were grouped together waiting for our horses, the poor man slid up to us. He went up to Miss Bessie, 'was glad to have seen her at the meeting,' etc. I knew sooner or later he would be used up, horse, foot, and dragoons, and stood by to see the fun.

"After some discussion, during which she kept her temper most beautifully, he asked her 'what, in her opinion, was the greatest argument for the truth of Christianity?' She drew herself up till she looked as tall as a drum-major, and said, 'Sir, the greatest argument of the truth of Christianity that I know of is that it has weathered eighteen centuries of preaching!' I felt sorry for the man. I'm inclined to think he will leave us henceforth to the more tender mercies of his Lordship of Walla-Ha."

"Arthur, haven't *you* a particular fancy in that direction, now really?"

"Heaven forbid! I am fond of her; but besides

her cold streaks, she breaks out occasionally into most unexpectedly careless freaks that would drive me clear frantic. One day she received me with the skirt of her dress wrong side out, and didn't even know it till I told her; and though she looks so trim, I know sometimes she pins the buttons on her jacket instead of sewing them. I would do anything for that girl but fall in love with her."

"You would be afraid of pins and the cold shoulder, eh?"

After this rather alarming conversation, Waring threw away his cigar, and in some trepidation soon found himself standing in the storm-house at the general's door. Through the storm-house window he could see the fair occupant of the room and her surroundings, and in spite of the cold made a reconnoitre before entering the enemy's camp.

The parlor was a square room, made comfortable with the inexpensive articles at hand. The three windows were deep-silled. Two had all the cracks tightly stuffed with cotton, and an army blanket was folded on each sill to keep out the draught and also make a seat. A lounge or sofa was drawn up near the fire,—it was covered with bear-skins and a red blanket, and upon being in-

spected would have been found to open like a box and contain a remarkable assortment of heavy wraps and furs. Four or five camp bookcases were set against the wall; three student's-lamps gave their soft and reliable light to the apartment; the rather ancient carpet was quite covered with various fur rugs and mats. An ugly stove at one side sent its pipe through the partition-wall, so that the chimney-place was left clear for the wood-fire. This was the pride of the general's heart, and was kindled regularly at four o'clock.

The fire formed the central object of the room. Though at present only a mass of glowing embers, it threw out a red light that made the streak of moonlight pouring in through the window look cold and uncomfortable. On a deer-skin in front of the fire three kittens were warmly curled up, adding greatly to the general air of comfort, and there was the young lady herself. She was seated in a large rocking-chair reading a book and toasting one slippered foot at the fire. Her profile, which was fine, was turned towards Waring; and though the style of hair-dressing at that time was abominable in its clumsiness, he saw that her head was well shaped and well set on her shoulders. Her

hair was quite dark and not as curly as his, her eyes were gray, her hands were rather large, slender, and remarkably white, but he thought the wrists too heavy for feminine beauty. Her foot amused him: it was slightly elevated on a block that had evidently been taken from the turkey-red covered wood-box and improvised into a footstool. It was a good-shaped foot, but large, and what astonished him exceedingly, it was encased in a bright blue woollen stocking. At that time it had not entered into the feminine mind to array her lower extremities in the guise of barber-poles, checker-boards, or flower-gardens, so the blue stockings quite upset our young friend's ideas of the fitness of things.

After this critical inspection he made his entrance, and in a moment found himself in Miss Lansing's presence.

As she turned her full face he saw it was not as perfect as the profile, and she was a little too pale; but a set of perfect teeth, a fairly jolly smile, contrasting with the soft gray eyes, made up an unusual and captivating combination.

"Miss Lansing!"

"Mr. Waring! I am sorry papa is not at home."

He looked at the teeth and dimples and concluded that he could stand it.

"Sit here by the fire; you must take off your cloak and gloves. We would all die of pneumonia in two weeks if we kept our wraps on inside and then went out into the cold; here we consider our health first and manners next."

After some chit-chat she suddenly said,—

"Excuse me, poor kitty is crying to get in."

There was an enormous Maltese cat on her hind legs apparently endeavoring to raise the window with her fore paws. Puss was brought in, and Bessie started to poke up the fire for her benefit. Waring rose to assist her.

"Oh, no; I'm stoker-in-chief; no one else dares touch this fire. In fact, last year—we were snowed up for two weeks—it was awfully dull,—the young doctor who had just arrived poked up this fire one evening. After dinner we had him court-martialed: he had scared the cat and burned a hole in the carpet. He was sentenced to mend the carpet and make an apologetic speech of five minutes' length to puss; it began, 'Oh, Felis felix,' and was a very bright oration. You see what might have been your fate."

After half an hour, during a short pause in the conversation Bessie coolly took out her watch and looked at it. Waring flushed with indignation to the roots of his curly hair, gathered up his cloak and said "Good-evening." Bessie saw in a second what was passing in his mind.

"Oh, Mr. Waring, I beg your pardon, I did not mean that: I only wanted to see how long before papa would be home. We are all so intimate here I quite forgot you were a stranger; he will be here in twenty minutes, and I am going to make his punch, and with the last two lemons in the garrison. I never ask gentlemen to take punch; he will ask you of course. Now sit still, and I'll consider myself forgiven. No, you can come with me and help."

They walked into the dining-room, procured the decanters, glasses, etc., and from a small closet Bessie brought out a little copper kettle. It was battered and bruised, having gone through many campaigns and adventures. Her mother had bought it for the general many years before, and though it had outlasted its good looks, it was still an invaluable addition to the menage.

The kettle filled with warm water was hung by

a chain to a hook in the chimney, and before the general arrived the kettle was singing, the cats were purring, the glasses were hot, Waring was intensely comfortable, and almost resigned to the blue stockings.

After her father's arrival Bessie dropped the character of hostess, and turned Waring over to his care until his departure. Thus instead of making a formal call he had spent the evening.

As he walked by Arthur's room, where a lot of the fellows were smoking, that officer called out,—

“Waring, won't you come in?”

“No, thank you, not to-night.”

“Did you meet the enemy?”

“Yes; I met the enemy, and we are theirs.”

“Just what I expected,” grunted Arthur; “always in some scrape.”

Waring was greatly impressed with his first day of frontier life, and soon went to a happy dream-land, peopled with pretty girls and Maltese cats all in their blue stockings.

Bessie was quite captivated with this handsome boy, as she thought him. She wondered if it could be true that he was so wild? if he was bad? No, she could not believe that; but why couldn't

men behave themselves anyhow, particularly when they were "nice"? After these philosophizings she read the evening service out of a small Prayer Book that looked as if it had endured as many campaigns as the copper kettle, thought of this "wild" young man in her prayers, and slept as only those with clear consciences and good digestion can sleep.

CHAPTER III.

IN a few weeks Waring had managed in some way to be thoroughly at home in the general's household. It was more by that happy faculty which only the best-bred men, and but few of them, possess of "never being in the way" than by any pushing on his part or exertion on Bessie's.

If she was to write a letter, figure up the accounts, or even go in another part of the house, Waring was given a book, told to be *bon enfant*, and left to his own devices. He was not to disturb the general or torment the cat; with these two restrictions the house was at his disposal.

Bessie took much pleasure in this young fellow's companionship. It was a new and delightful sensation to have some one to talk to at any time, particularly when the some one was handsome and interesting. That he fancied her and was content in her presence she could not fail to discover, but that this "mere boy" was sincerely in love with her she never imagined any more than

she expected a formal proposal from her infantile admirer, Tom Campbell.

In spite of her enjoyment in the course affairs had taken, she felt a vague uneasiness.

Though Waring had given no indication of that wildness with which he was credited at the Academy, she could see that he was not quite liked by the younger men and not entirely approved by the older ones.

Upon one occasion he had kept a riding-party waiting five minutes. The general, being the soul of punctuality, looked with positive anger on this careless offender ; but as it was a pleasure excursion, not in the line of duty at all, nothing was said.

Once he had lost his temper and sworn at his men. She knew if that happened again there would be a reprimand. Many of the general's soldiers had braved war, starvation, and cold with him ; and though he was a strict disciplinarian, he was interested in them personally, looked out for their welfare, and would have them treated as men. Then he did not go to church, which both officially and personally hurt the chaplain and annoyed the general. In fact, his disagreeableness to his

superiors was not from any overt act of insubordination, which would have been speedily suppressed, but from an entire though good-natured disregard of their advice and suggestions.

The doctor, old enough to be his father, gently hinted that he was not sufficiently clad, and recommended heavier boots; he paid no more attention to that than he did to the chaplain's quietly-expressed hope "that we will see you at service next Sunday." Having expressed atheistical views, more in a fashionable than a profound way, the little community also had that against him. On the other hand, no one could question his honesty and generosity of character, or his earnestness and dash in any unusual or arduous duty.

Bessie, after considering the matter at some length, concluded that 'as the young lieutenant had constituted himself to some extent a member of the family she was at liberty to speak plainly to him of these his misdoings, and if he came that evening while her father was at the Weekly Whist Club at the major's, she would give him a "good talking to."

She was a little nervous in looking forward to this interview, however, for she had never

interfered in any military matters. To be a Mrs. Major O'Dowd, straightening out, or rather tangling up the affairs of the post, was to her mind the last stage of infamy. Wishing to appear as little formidable as possible, she put on her long black silk dress, turned it in at the neck, put some illusion around the throat, pinned it with a gold pin,—a little bayonet with a ruby heart on its point, that she called “love and war,”—donned red stockings this time, and seated herself by the fire to gather her forces for the onslaught.

In a short time she heard Waring whistling, softly, “*O luce di quest' anima*,” and the cold snow creaking under his footsteps. Soon he was seated in the warm, cosey room, but seemed unable to “thaw out,” as he expressed it. Bessie saw that he was almost in a chill, and that his boots were soaking wet.

“How in the name of common sense did you get your feet wet in this weather? I never saw a man so bent on his own destruction.”

“Why, I——”

But his teeth chattered, and the mystery was never explained.

“Now, I'll bring you some dry shoes, and then

I will hang up the kettle and give you some hot whiskey."

She ran up-stairs, brought down a pair of the obnoxious blue stockings and a pair of her own slippers, and while Waring made his toilet in the dining-room she arranged the kettle in the fireplace.

The stockings and slippers, though a tight fit, were put on, the small boots and socks laid before the fire to dry, the hot dose duly administered, and the two young people settled themselves down to a sociable evening.

Waring was apparently lost in admiring contemplation of one of his small feet, Bessie had just interrupted his meditations by suavely exclaiming, "It is pretty, isn't it?" when they heard the hall door open. She put the glasses quickly out of sight, gave the boots and socks a most unladylike little kick that sent them behind the big red box, her dress rustled, the cat was startled and jumped, and when Carsten—who was the caller—entered the room he plainly saw that his presence had caused a slight commotion, and that something had been doing or saying that was not for him to know.

Carsten was a fine-looking though not a pleasant-faced man, and his powerful physique gave one more the idea of brute force than manly strength. He seated himself comfortably: evidently he did not intend to leave for some time. Bessie was on pins and needles: she wanted to give Waring his boots then and there and send him home. Carsten, who always had a discontented expression, now looked black as a thunder-cloud, Waring relapsed into the sulks, and she heartily wished them both in their own quarters. After an hour of this misery Carsten left. She rather snappishly handed Waring his boots, told him to roll his socks up in his pocket, and for mercy sake to go. She knew that Carsten had his suspicions, and did not wish to further them by having Waring remain longer.

She saw him depart with relief, and wished devoutly she had left boots, bottle, and all in plain sight. "Certainly Mr. Carsten would not imagine that I had allowed Charlie Waring to make a dressing-room of the parlor, and with me in it."

After arranging the room for her father's return she went up-stairs, and passed a restless night, being possessed with an unpleasant presentiment that trouble was ahead.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning at the mess-table, when there was a pause in the conversation, Carsten said, quite conspicuously,—

“Oh, Waring, I was very sorry to interrupt the little *tête-à-tête* last night.”

“Ah,” returned Waring, “if your contrition was as deep as your call was lengthy, your sorrow was deep indeed.”

Carsten turned toward him as if he would strike him, but suddenly checking himself, said, with an exasperating sneer,—

“And, Waring, where did you get your pretty new socks and ties from?”

Arthur, who was seated by Waring, was alarmed at the unpleasant turn affairs had taken, and broke in with,—

“Do stop your chaffing, Carsten; do let us have our meals in peace anyway.” And with a “for all our sakes keep your temper” under his

breath to Waring, he succeeded in gaining a truce, although he knew that war was declared.

He resolved at his very earliest chance to see Bessie and tell her candidly what mischief was brewing, and find out the ground of Carsten's insinuations. Some he thought there must be, as he would otherwise hardly have dared to speak as he did. As he was going off for several days with the general, he wrote to Bessie that morning,—

“DEAR MISS BESSIE,—

“I am very anxious to have a long talk with you before I leave to-morrow. It is a beautiful day, won't you take a walk with me soon after guard-mount?

“M. A.”

Bessie replied, “Yes, with pleasure;” and at the appointed time, arrayed in blanket-coat, fur cap, and gloves, she started off with her friend, knowing that Waring was going to be the subject of discussion. She had begun to realize that the adopting and disciplining of headstrong young men was not altogether as funny as she had imagined.

Neither spoke for some time, and Arthur saw that it was left for him to open fire.

"Miss Bessie, it has always struck me that the man who had not the courage to give a friend a timely word of counsel or warning, even at the risk of being considered an intermeddler, was very much like the Frenchman who would not rescue the drowning man because they had never been introduced. I think you can have no doubt of the sincerity of my friendship for you and General Lansing, or of my appreciation of your hospitality and kindness. Therefore you can imagine that action of mine that endangers this friendship is only undertaken from the purest of motives. In plain English, I am going to ask you if you either know or care what you are doing with Waring? As the chaplain says, 'to make it clear,' I will put it under three heads. In the first place, you must let the rest of us know our ground. Any time, morning, noon, or night, that we go to your house there is Waring before us."

"Well, even if he is, half the time I am reading or writing, not even speaking to him or thinking about him."

"That may be, but we other fellows do not

know that, and, in spite of your manner being unchanged, we feel decidedly *de trop*. If Waring did not put on an injured air and relapse into his infantile sulks it would not be so bad, but he shows his disgust at our entrance so plainly we cannot help supposing him the one favored above all others.

"In the second place, if you are engaged to him say so."

"As he has never asked me, the probabilities are that I am not."

"Never asked you! You know, Bessie Lansing, that every tone of his voice and glance of his eye shows his love for you, if he hasn't said it in so many words. The other evening when he got the captain's spur out of your dress, his manner was so full of devotion we fellows confidently expected to see him kiss the hem of your garment."

"It hasn't a hem."

"Well, the bias gimp, or whatever you call it. And then—forgive me—but as you are not ready to acknowledge him openly as your lover, do not allow him any privileges above the rest of us."

Bessie turned to him with heightened color and flashing eyes,—

"Lieutenant Arthur, that at least you have neither right nor excuse to say to me. Do you think that after living all these years with men as my constant and often sole companions I am foolish enough to put myself deliberately at the mercy of any one of you?"

"Miss Bessie, before you go off in a temper please listen to me." And he recounted the scene at the mess-table. "You see it is not enough for you—or any other girl—to be convinced of your own dignity, you must have all the world convinced also, particularly the masculine part of it."

Then Bessie gave him the history of the affair, and Arthur promised that in a quiet way he would explain matters and make it all right.

"The third thing is the hardest of all, for to speak ill of a brother-officer, and a superior in rank, behind his back savors of cowardice, but do be careful of offending Carsten. For some reason he has a grudge against you or the general, and if he can hurt you through Waring, and with safety to himself, he will do it. Thrown together as we are and depending almost entirely upon ourselves for society and amusement, any break or quarrel would be a general calamity."

"I hate Mr. Carsten, too, and will tell you why. A few days before he left the East he was at a dinner-party in New York; at the same party was a young married lady, a friend of mine. Some remarks were made about the loneliness of frontier life, how he would pass the time, etc. He then and there avowed his intention of having a flirtation with old Lansing's daughter. Then, too, he said my mother was a 'rebel'! I heard of his impudent speeches before I saw him, and was on my guard. I had not the slightest idea of playing coon to his Captain Scott. Still, I acted as if I had heard none of his ungentlemanly remarks, and was always polite to him. One evening he was at the house and asked me if I would walk over with him and call on the doctor's wife. I said 'certainly,' opened the lounge-box, got out my wraps, handed him my coat to hold, and put both arms in the sleeves. While he had me thus 'in chancery' he deliberately leaned over and attempted to kiss me on the cheek. Nothing ever made me so mad in all my life, everything in the room seemed to whirl and dance, and in half a second I thought of telling my father, of striking him across the face with my riding-whip, which

was lying on the table, and of various other ridiculous things.

“Fortunately, I collected my wits sufficiently to say, ‘Mr. Carsten, you are not a gentleman, and you are a coward!’ I was so furious I expect I looked funny. I walked out of the room and up-stairs. After a few moments of waiting I heard him leave. I’ll do him the justice to say that the next day he did apologize in a way,—‘He had kissed girls before and they had never gone into a tantrum, etc., etc.’

“I said we would let it all go and talk no more about it, but as you may imagine we have not loved each other since. I suppose either one of the offences I could have forgiven, but after his speaking as he did of my father and mother and daring to touch me, the ugly brute——”

“Why, Miss Bessie, don’t be so vindictive. We will return to our interesting young *mouton*, who being neither ugly nor a brute, you may become more reasonable and amiable. Waring is a nice fellow and I like him, but I would not like to have you marry him. A woman of your nature would never be happy with a man whom she knew to be her intellectual or moral inferior. I do not

know just how to express it, but you will marry some one you are just a little afraid of."

"Rest assured, I will never marry Charlie Waring."

"You do not know; he seems to be eminently lovable, one of the 'with all his faults I love him still' sort. Since he was fourteen he has been the privileged pet of some woman or other. Don't be too sure, you may love him, too."

Bessie replied, half laughing,—

"I did not say I would not love him, I said I would never marry him."

At the end of these mutual confidences they were almost home, and before they reached the door Arthur said,—

"Now you have forgiven my lecture, I hope?"

"Indeed, I am much obliged, and will try to heed your sage advice. Come in to supper to-night at six. Papa will want to see you about the final arrangements. By the way, why are you all going to Fort Granger?"

"Your father is to see the department commander, and they are to arrange about some expeditions as early as possible next spring."

"Well, at six, then."

CHAPTER V.

THE supper passed off pleasantly, guests and callers going early, leaving the general and his daughter to complete his preparations for departure.

The next morning they breakfasted by lamp-light, and by the time the sun was surely up the whole party were in the saddle and away. If the weather remained pleasant they would make the fort that evening; if not, the early start would enable them to reach a small settlement, more than half-way, where they could find some sort of shelter for the night.

Half to Bessie's relief and half to her regret, Waring had not put in an appearance the day before.

Her conversation with Arthur had left her more nervous and worried than she cared to confess.

By noon the thermometer had fallen, the wind had risen, and the whole world seemed a mass of whirling, cutting, stinging, blinding snow. To

keep warm any place was an impossibility. As the night came on the fury of the storm increased.

Though Bessie had every reason to suppose—as was really the case—that her father's party were in safe quarters hours before, she could not overcome a feeling of nervous terror and a most unusual sense of loneliness, which for some unaccountable reason, physical or mental, at times takes possession of even the strongest and most practical of men and women.

The stove was doing its utmost, additional wood was heaped on the hearth, extra blankets were hung at the windows and door, yet every blast of wind sent a shiver through the girl's frame, and every sound made her start.

It was only seven o'clock in the evening, but it seemed hours since the early breakfast.

Knowing she could neither read nor sleep, and that no one would be out such a night who could possibly avoid it, she concluded to make herself a cup of coffee, pull up her rather masculine-looking writing-table to the fire and arrange its contents. Letters, papers, and accounts were "in such a state" that this occupation would consume considerable time, and if the wind

went down she would know it and could sleep in peace.

The old campaigner was hung on its hook, the table drawn near the ugly though much-appreciated stove, and Bessie, after the manner of young women who set about desperate and solitary undertakings, divested her head of "rats" and hair-pins, twisted up her long hair in a knot, fastened it with a comb, and started in this determined manner to make a night of it.

She was just seating herself when she thought she heard some one at the door. Thinking nothing short of calamity or accident had called any one out that awful night, she hastily flung a fur rug round her shoulders and opened the outside door herself.

Waring—for it was he—seemed fairly whizzed into the hall along with the snow and wind. She saw immediately by his face that nothing unusual had occurred, and then, woman-like, thought, "What a fright I must be with my hair in this fashion and a bear-skin on my back!"

"Ugh!" gasped Waring, as he recovered his breath, "I never saw such a night; I'm frozen stiff."

"No wonder; nothing short of battle, murder,

and sudden death would bring a sane man out in such a blizzard. My heart jumped into my mouth with fright when I heard you. Come into the parlor and get warm."

"May I sit on the deer-skin in front of the fire?"

"Anywhere; but don't disturb my cats: they are my only foul-weather friends."

"Except me."

"Yes, excuse me,—birds of a feather,—go and sit with the cats. My walking up and down won't give you the fidgets, will it? I am too nervous to keep still."

Waring watched her anxiously as she paced back and forth.

"Mr. Waring, you need not look so frightened, I never faint or have hysterics; but sometimes when I am here all alone, and the wind howls so dismally, I do get the horrors. One night long ago, in New Mexico, I saw a party of men come into the fort. They had crossed the mountains from the north, had been lost in the snow; they had lived five days on mule-meat,—think of it! Their clothes hung in shreds; some of their comrades had died. A night like this brings it all

back, and when my father is away it haunts me." With a shudder she stood still in her walk.

"I had an idea you would be awfully lonesome; you know you haven't any mother or sisters; I suppose that's one thing makes you different from other girls; so I came over to stay with you awhile, if you want me,—I mean if you will let me."

"Mr. Waring, I believe you are the first person that ever was sorry for me, or imagined—oh, I am so desolate sometimes!" And this young Amazon threw herself down on a chair, with her head and arms on the table, and began to sob in a most undignified manner.

Our young hero was overcome with consternation at the result of his innocent remark. For a few moments he sat perfectly still, listening to the shrieking of the wind, the roaring of the fire, and the girl's sobs, almost ready to weep too. Then he rose and quietly seated himself by her, began smoothing the rather disordered hair in a gentle childish way, and, with tears in his eyes, said,—

"Oh, Bessie darling, what, what did I say? I did not mean to make you cry; won't you speak

to me? I did not mean to tell you for a long time, but you must know that I love you. Of course, you cannot love me so soon, but by and by you will. Won't you try? You know how sorry I must be." "Puff," he blew out the lamp.

With his instinctive understanding of the whims and vanities of women, he knew that she would never raise her head with that bright light in her eyes. Every girl—poetry to the contrary notwithstanding—knows that when she is in tears she is simply a fright.

How often it is that these careless but sympathetic young dare-devils carry away the favors from their comrades,—men frequently handsomer, more brilliant, and occasionally more upright than they.

There are two things that a thoroughly refined and educated woman involuntarily shrinks from,—that plantigrade style of flattery from the "handsome man," who is generally not as irresistible as he imagines himself to be, and that unconscious hardness with which the brilliant or successful man of the world walks roughshod over her foibles or innocent weaknesses.

Does not this in a measure answer the question

so often asked by men, "What can a woman of her stamp see to admire in a fellow like that?"

The handsome man would have told her that in tears she was beautiful, and she never would have believed him again. The brilliant man would have sneered at such nonsense,—inwardly of course; but she would have known it all the same, and shrunk from him. Waring blew out the light, and she was afraid she would love him.

In a few moments she had composed herself.

"Please forgive me for making such a goose of myself; no one has seen me cry since I was eleven years old."

"We will come over by the fire and think up a cheerful subject; you sit in the arm-chair, and I'll share the deer-skin along with my humble companions." He arranged himself comfortably, leaning against Bessie's chair for a back.

For a few moments they were both quiet, listening to the driving storm. Bessie thought now was the time for the hard duty she had in store, for Waring's declaration coming right after her talk with Arthur left her no conscientious means of escape. She summoned all her courage, and in a half-joking way began.

"Monsieur le Lieutenant, I have had a rod in pickle for you for several days, and you must listen to me with respectful attention."

She began with his professional peccadilloes, and he quite good-naturedly promised to amend.

"Then you must go to service on Sunday."

"I think going to church is a piece of nonsense, anyhow."

In Bessie's earnest nature a thing was right or wrong, and Waring's boyish nonsense, to her mind, was a deliberate crime. It was a subject she could not talk to him about either, so she said, very gently,—

"But my father and most of your superior officers (you are the infant of the regiment, you know), happily, think differently; therefore it would be much pleasanter for us all if you will go."

"I will, if I can go with you."

"Certainly you cannot go with me. Every man and woman in the chapel would suppose that I had bribed you."

"I don't care; I'm not ashamed to have everybody know that I would do anything you asked me to."

"You do not understand; it must not appear that I have given you any hints. I have never before interfered with any garrison matters. This is more than I have done for any living man. It rests with you whether I shall bitterly regret it or not."

"All right; I will go to church."

"Another thing that I must insist upon: that you do not come here so often."

"You are just like all the rest of women: now that you know I love you, you don't care for me, and want to turn me adrift."

Poor Bessie was becoming hopeless over this unreasonable youth.

"Do listen and keep your temper long enough to hear me through. I do not wish to turn you adrift. You know we have other friends who are entitled to consideration. You must not act as if every guest of ours was a trespasser on your premises. It is hard and painful for me to speak so to you, and it is only to avoid serious trouble hereafter that I can bring myself to do it. I hope you understand me and are not angry."

"Am I to be put on an allowance of visits,—a sort of half rations arrangement? Shall I flee

before the sedate Arthur and that d—d Carsten? Oh, I didn't mean to say that. Please lay out the campaign more clearly."

"You are only to act like a sensible gentleman instead of a spoiled child; in some ways you are more of a baby than Tom."

His good nature returned at this sally.

"Now let me go over my lesson. I am, to begin with, a cat, and then a baby. I'm not to swear, not to bully my men, to be always on time, to go to church, to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters,—Arthur, Carsten, Major Doty, & Co.,—to bear no mal——"

"Do not be ridiculous, for the hardest thing for me to say is yet to come."

Bessie looked so grave that he quieted down immediately.

"You have told me you love me; I am sorry you have, for it cannot help changing our very pleasant relations. I can never feel towards you as you wish, but you must know I am really fond of you; if I were not, the whole matter would be comparatively easy for us both. If you think best, get exchanged, leave us."

"Would you send me away forever, Bessie?"

And he put his hand over hers as it rested on the arm of the chair.

“No, I will not send you,”—and she gently drew away her hand,—“but if, after thinking it over, you consider it best to go, I shall think so too. Being as fond of you as I am, I am afraid you will constantly attribute other motives to my actions than I intend. I have never willingly deceived any one in my whole life, and if you continue on this intimate footing, I do not want to be reproached in months, no, nor in years to come, with having held out false hopes. Now you can think this all over. I cannot fly from the danger; you can; it is all in your hands.”

“There is no need to think it over; you do not know what you have already done for me. I’m bad enough, no doubt, but a saint to what I was. Somehow from the first moment I saw you—here through the window—I have been different. I have not played for a cent, and have not taken a drop too much. I will go to the devil if you throw me over.”

“Hush! We will make some coffee, and after that you will go—not to the devil—to your quarters.”

After the coffee Waring rose to leave.

"Now, Bessie, won't you leave off that 'Mr.' and call me Charlie? You need not think that I will forget that you have said you will never love me;" that was not exactly what she had said. "And now I want you to give me something,—it is a very small thing,—will you?"

She naturally imagined it was a kiss, but said, quite innocently,—

"Why, what is it?"

"Just one little bit of a curl."

She felt ashamed of her first suspicion, and hesitated a moment. She was not in the habit of indulging in these sentimental pastimes, and had heard more than one man laugh over his collection of "reliques."

"What will you do with it? Hang it on your belt as the last of many scalps, and exhibit it like the other braves in your wigwam?"

"How can you talk so when you know I love you!"

"Very well; if you will not get tragic or cross you can have it. Here are the scissors. No, let me; you would take it just where it would show the most. Your own curls are much prettier. Before

you take it you must promise me one thing, that you will be my true friend."

It was the only way to bind him to anything like discretion. She had all confidence in his honest intentions, but was afraid of the consequences of his childish tempers and outbreaks of jealousy.

"Now, Bessie, I promise solemnly to be a true friend. Won't you seal the contract?"

Arthur's warning was just in time. With a mischievous glance she said,—

"No, thank you; your word is as good as your bond. If papa were here we would not let you go home such a night as this, but I must turn you out. Good-night, *mon enfant*."

And Waring was ushered into outer darkness with the brown curl warming his very heart.

Bessie resumed her pacing back and forth, asking herself over and over again for hours what she ought to do in this affair, and how far she was responsible for Waring's welfare, both now and in the future. Awakening suddenly from her revery, and finding the storm much less violent, she decided to try to rest during the few remaining hours of the night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE general with his party returned safely in the course of a few days, and matters went on in their usual way for some months. All Bessie felt capable of doing was to guide affairs into quiet and peaceful channels.

Marry Waring she could not; yet he kept her in a continual state of anxiety. To have for a husband a boy who had to be coaxed and threatened into the proprieties was too much of an undertaking. Then there was that mysterious wild scrape, whatever it might be, of which she had vaguely heard. His correct deportment since his arrival at Fort Derby had been first the joke, then the surprise of his associates, and in fact they all, even Bessie, expected a relapse sooner or later into his old ways. Living so much in small communities where the domestic relations are not hidden from one's neighbors by the multifarious conventionalities of fashionable life, Bessie had had some sad opportunities of seeing the misery

brought on families by these nice fellows who had reformed just long enough to draw a girl into a wretched marriage, from which she was too conscientious or too proud to free herself. There was a woman she knew, trying to bring up her sons as Christian men, with a father dissolute, irreligious, selfish, and extravagant. Then again there was that "little idiot," Lieutenant Jones. Twice she had encountered him just in time to save him from encountering her father, and for the sake of his poor little wife had guided his uncertain footsteps home, after which deed of mercy she told the chaplain that all the way she wanted "to kill the little beast."

Then, the pay. No woman, to her mind, who had a particle of self-respect would marry for money. That was simply infamous. But to marry on nothing, that was not to be thought of either. After these self-directed arguments her forcible and logical conclusion always was, "I don't want to marry any one, and I won't. *So!*"

But what was she to do? For she found that Waring's entire devotion was becoming a necessity to her. She could not send him away, for he ungenerously held over her head his threat of

"going to the devil." Apparently her only hope was to lead him up to a reasonable point, where she might definitely and without danger break with him. One thing only was certain, she must at any cost guard against letting him know to what extent her interest had centred in him.

"That would only make it harder. I cannot marry him. In a week he would choke me in a fit of jealousy; and if he got drunk,—horrors! I believe I could murder some men."

Things went on their course, and spring came. Bessie allowed as little love-making as possible, lectured Waring upon wasting his time, set him reading and even studying, and looked forward with both joy and sorrow to the time of his needing her no longer, and going away strong and brave and alone.

In spite of her worry and perplexity, she found a charming side to this present existence. Beside the mere pleasure of being loved, a new and delightful influence had come over her.

Her life had hitherto been from circumstances an unusually selfish though not an ungenerous one. After her father's few wishes had been consulted, she had only herself to consider. The

general was not the man to expect any but the most usual manifestations of feminine care, and anything like gush would have simply appalled him. Bessie felt that in some mysterious way the world had grown larger, kinder, and more understandable since that stormy night when Waring had so gently said he loved her, and that maternal instinct which love always awakens in a woman's breast made her take an almost fierce pleasure in training this youth in the way he should go. Sometimes the temptation to tell him what a blessing he was to her cold and narrow life almost overcame her; but her natural caution prevailed, and she would only say to herself, "Oh, Charlie, if you only knew, how surprised you would be; but you never, never will."

During one of these meditations Tom arrived to know if Miss Bessie would go riding with him.

"Yes, my boy, in half an hour. I see it clearly. *My* mission in life is to educate the rising generation. But first bring a rod,—not for your back, my son,—and, according to my rash vow, I will teach you to throw a fly; for you know some of these days we are going on a trouting expedition."

The general's quarters had a wide though not

highly-finished porch on three sides, thus they were sheltered from some of the cold of winter and from a great deal of the heat of summer.

On one of the three sides there was always some breeze to be found, so here was a sort of social rallying-point that during pleasant weather was more used than the inside of the house. Enough vines climbed over the various posts and trellises to make a pleasant shade and afford a slight screen.

Our little community gave themselves up to enjoying summer, as only we who have a nine months' winter can do. We North Americans read, write, and think of the inhabitants of those favored spots where they have a climate instead of weather as constantly enjoying their privileges. But does the swarthy Italian enjoy his noonday nap, under the ivy-clad wall of course, as much as our American *pater familias* does his after-dinner cigar on his own pretty porch on a moonlight summer evening? The Italian is more picturesque, but not as comfortable or appreciative.

The Sandwich Island belle on her surf-board never having felt the mercury "twenty below,"

cannot have the same realizing sense of her enjoyment as the dashing New Yorker who dons her natty bathing-suit at Newport, knowing that in three short months she will be comfortable in a seal-skin coat. We know there is not a moment of this blessed season to be lost, and so proceed to make a business of enjoyment. To be sure, it is often in a way that strikes awe to the foreigner's soul and dyspepsia into his stomach; he, poor man, having hitherto imagined that even the dogs slept between eleven and three, and that only lions and tigers ate meat with the thermometer registering ninety in the shade.

This almost living out of doors made Waring's coming and going an easy matter, but his being alone with Bessie quite difficult. Everybody wandered about to see everybody else. Bessie had noticed for several days that he had something on his mind, and wondered if at last he had got himself into trouble. Arthur assured her that he had not to his knowledge, but she decided to find out for herself at the first opportunity.

Late one afternoon, when the usual group was on the porch, the irrepressible Tom came along

with his bow and arrows. He shot an arrow that fell on top of the veranda, and insisted upon climbing up after it. Waring told him he would break his small neck, and that, if Miss Bessie would let him take off his coat, he would get it.

He threw down his coat, and, with the help of the trellis and vines, soon gained the roof. He had quite a hunt for the arrow, and, after he had thrown it down, remained some little time in his elevated position, saying it was cooler up there. In fact, he was quietly taking a view of Bessie's room.

It was very different from what he expected a girl's room to be like. The furniture he hardly noticed. The walls showed a collection of riding-whips, a pair of snow-shoes, two trout-rods, several old hats, two handsome engravings, and her mother's portrait. Numerous photographs of her friends were put here and there, and, horror of horror, there hung over the mantel a little rifle and a small "Smith & Wesson." Her boots stood in a corner, and her slippers by them looked small in comparison. As his eye wandered about the premises, he noticed tied to the frame of the looking-glass a broken spur, which he recognized

as one he had asked her "to keep a moment" once when they were out riding, and on the bureau there was his photograph balancing the general's dignified face. A light blue tie was lying carelessly on the pin-cushion; he walked round to the front window, all the time chatting to those below to allay suspicion, reached in and captured it, and then lightly swung himself down to the ground. No explorer had ever met with more gratifying or more unexpected success. He exhibited the trophy so Bessie alone could see it. Alas! she knew he had seen both picture and spur, and wished Tom and his weapons at a respectful distance.

Oh, Master Tom, that such an *enfant terrible* as you should pose as Cupid! A Cupid with knickerbockers and freckles!

The conversation turned upon a fishing excursion that had been for some time contemplated, when Waring asked some questions exposing his ignorance upon such matters. Bessie saw her opportunity, told him "to come to-morrow and be posted up."

The next day he appeared at the appointed time, and she started to give him his lesson,

hoping that afterwards of his own accord he would tell her his tribulations, if he really had any.

She was one of those people who inspire the confidence of others, and become very encyclopædias of their friends' disastrous love-affairs and melancholy experiences without themselves ever having confided a single disappointment to their nearest and dearest. Probably it is this close-mouthedness regarding their own matters that induces the rest of the world to trust if not always to love them.

"Now, *mon enfant*, have you a trout-rod?"

"Bessie, I would not know a trout-rod from the one that spares the child, or does something like that."

"I will lend you one, but I will have to show you how to mend it. My split bamboo that Major White left me I would not lend you for—for any consideration. Of course, you haven't a fly-book?"

"I confess with humility that I never saw one. There was not one volume in the West Point library."

"Your ignorance is vast enough, don't exag-

gerate it. Here is mine; and you must learn the difference between a Mole-chunk-a-muck and a 'Silver Doctor,' for instance."

"A what!"

"Now, some of these flies are copied from nature and some evolved from the inner consciousness of the tackle-maker. Now, this is a leader, and is made of——"

"Catgut."

"No, it isn't; it is unwound right out of the silk-worm; he is pinned down fast and this is pulled off his reel."

"I see; evolved from his inner consciousness, as it were."

"They come from Spain. You see they are not two feet long. I'll show you how to make the knots. If you know how to use a long whip in driving you can easily learn to cast. Now that I have enlightened you, it is the turn of the next youngest."

"Bessie, why do you always talk to me as if I were a child?"

"Never having pondered the question, I am not prepared to answer. Why do you go about looking like the 'melancholy Jaques'? Hold

that tip steady. I can't wind and wax the silk when you jerk like that."

"Some time, Bessie, when I have a chance I will tell you why I am troubled and sad."

"Well, tell me now."

"No; it would take too long, and I must be sure of having you all to myself for some time,—perhaps when we are off on this excursion."

"There, now, is quite a respectable rod; see that you do your teacher credit. You must go now, I have something to do."

"Will you wear some violets this evening if I send them to you?"

"I will if the stems are long. My beloved Tom brings me numbers, but in a state of hopeless decapitation. Why does mankind insist upon taking the heads off things generally, flowers and women in particular?"

"You seem very fond of violets. I think they are expressionless little things."

"No doubt that is the reason they always make me think of a certain pair of blue eyes. My dear boy, don't kiss my hand. It is very big, and you are very foolish."

CHAPTER VII.

A COUPLE of mornings after this the sportsmen assembled at the general's for their early start. They formed a picturesque group in their dark suits, bright handkerchiefs, and slouch hats. Bessie also wore a dark blue flannel shirt, a very short riding-skirt, and a soft blue felt hat. A bright scarlet handkerchief was tied around her neck, and through her hat-band, in true fisherman fashion, she had twisted a couple of leaders. In her leather belt she had a large bunch of violets, evidently doomed to an early death.

The second morning after their start they reached a certain mountain stream where they were to pitch their tents. They were to remain a week, and every day one or two stayed in to watch the camp. The second day Bessie and Mrs. Worthington declared their intention of staying "home" for a rest. Arthur and Waring volunteered to remain with them. Arthur had offered as soon as he saw that Waring intended

doing so, simply for the purpose of keeping Carsten away, who was also of the party.

The truce between these two was always on the point of being broken. Waring could not keep his temper, and Carsten, though constantly irritating him, was too shrewd to give sufficient cause for a quarrel. Arthur seeing that he would soon make Carsten quarrel and have the business settled, still wanted to postpone the unpleasant denouement as long as possible. Only the four were left in camp. While Arthur was devoting himself to the doctor's wife Waring walked up to Bessie.

"Miss Bessie, will you come with me for just a short stroll?"

She was frightened at his serious manner, but knew that it was too late to retreat from her position as friend and adviser. A few steps brought them into the real forest, where the fallen logs and trees were covered with soft green moss. All things old, rough, or ugly were concealed. It was one of those beautiful spots only found near "trails" in the real wilderness, never by a country path, no matter how quiet and secluded.

Waring seated her on a mound of moss with a fallen tree for a support, and, throwing himself down by her side, began his confession.

“Bessie, I have something to tell you, what it costs me you can never know. I have told you over and over again how much I love you. I love you better than all the world, but no good girl will ever marry me. If you ever had thought of it you never will again, never, never. Still, I would rather not have you at all than not have you fair and square. I know that I am signing my own death-warrant, please turn your head away while I am doing it.

“Soon after leaving the Academy I was with some friends in the country. We were at a little boarding-house, kept by an old skinflint,—a woman who had a pretty daughter. I was sorry for the girl; her old mother was snarling and scolding at her all day long, and I found afterwards that the few thousand dollars that I was then fortunate enough to possess had been magnified in her eyes into a fortune. She was willing to let me have her daughter on any terms. I truly only intended to be kind to the poor child; I suppose that it is foolish to pose as the victim of a

plot, but the more I think of it the more astonished I am at my own blind foolishness.

“The old widow, it was rumored, had by her tongue driven her husband into the army, where he was killed in the war. With the same weapon and her love of money she succeeded in driving her daughter to her own and my destruction. The bully of a brother, who was a brute to his sister always, met me one day, fortunately in a quiet roadway, and informed me that he was going to shoot me. I think now he had not the slightest intention of doing so until I said, ‘You are welcome; fire.’ I stood perfectly still, thinking that perhaps I deserved to be shot. He hurt me very slightly on the shoulder; a mark something like Cain’s, I suppose: it’s always a reminder. I was ordered out here, leaving the affair in the hands of the only friend who knew of it. Do you wonder that I have been irritable, moody, and desperate during these months of waiting? I have only just heard from him. The girl, probably without her mother’s knowledge, sent me word that she had forgiven me. My few thousand dollars are gone to them. I am poorer than a beggar. I cannot tell my mother where the

money is gone, it would kill her. All the fellows know it's gone somewhere. Here I am with nothing but my pay, in love with a beautiful girl, and no hope. Oh, Bessie, every time I look at you the whole dreadful thing comes over me anew. I am not complaining. The hardest thing I have to bear is the knowledge that I deserve it all, and more."

He threw his arm across her lap and, with his head on it, burst into tears. Poor Bessie did not know whether to run from him or to put her arms around him. How often in future years, when her own little ones were weeping out their childish griefs at her knee, did she remember this her first task of consolation, when the youthful transgressor found the way so hard!

Oh, how that girl must have loved him to forgive him! She imagined she would have murdered him! "To forgive," "to forgive," the words seemed to ring in her ears and beat in her heart. Such love she had read of, but never believed in. And then, too, for him to love *her* enough to lose rather than deceive her. Leaning over him, with her hands on his curls, she said,—

"Charlie dear, it is angelic in her to forgive

you. It is very brave in you to tell me. I do not think I can quite understand either of you. It's too high a flight for my colder fancy to reach. In her place I could no more forgive you than in yours I could stand up and be shot at. Oh, Charlie! Don't, don't, it breaks my heart to have you wicked or unhappy!"

After a few moments he said,—

"The thing is over at last, and we must walk back. Bessie, you have been very merciful," and for the first time he kissed her cheek. "They say you read the whole service every night, won't you say one prayer for me sometimes?—unless you think I'm past it."

"I think I have ever since the first night I saw you. I knew all the time that you were looking through the window at me, and it was very hard to keep a straight face and receive you with becoming dignity."

The fishermen all came in for an early supper, and for two or three hours afterwards all lounged or smoked around the camp-fire. Bessie heard none of the jokes or stories as she gazed at the glowing flame of the fire and the bright stars in the heavens.

In a few months what a difficult and complicated place hers had become! It is easy to do right when one knows clearly what is right. But if you were very fond of a handsome young soldier, and knew you would both be wretched if you married him, and if you told him so, and he then said he would follow his inclinations and go to the devil, and you had every reason to believe that he would, what ought you to do? "Oh! if we could always stay this way," she thought, "living in camps, on horseback, and in beautiful woods, and be always young, that would indeed be happiness." But the man she would marry must be more like her father,—upright, strong, "a very help in time of need,"—not an anxiety, a care, not even a loving care.

"FORT DERBY, —, 187—.

"DEAR MAMIE,—

"As I wrote up all our little items of news in my last, there is nothing particular to say to you. 'The fate' you prophesy for me is simply impossible, for Charlie Waring is to leave here before many months at farthest, and in all probability we will never see each other again.

"We have just returned from trouting. You know papa is a great sportsman. You should have seen my costume. It is all right here, but I often laugh to myself as I picture the sensation it would create on Broadway or the consternation on Chestnut Street. I must tell you one thing that happened.

"Beside the saddle-horses we had a small ambulance. The seats are sideways and facing each other. We were to take turns, four in the vehicle and four on horseback; as the weather had become very warm and the moon rose early in the evening, we were to rest during the afternoon and ride most of the night. The second evening out we were called about eleven o'clock to resume our journey. I can sleep with a blanket for a bed very comfortably. It was now time for the doctor and Mrs. Worthington, Charlie and me, to take our turn in the ambulance; papa, Arthur, Carsten, and Ursus Major, as I call him, taking the horses.

"I sat on the side with Mrs. Worthington, put my head in her lap, and was soon comfortably asleep. I woke up once. I indistinctly remember that the doctor was snoring in the corner

and that Charlie looked so uncomfortable. He seemed to be in such a strange, bent-over position.

"About sunrise we reached our destination. After breakfast I saw Mrs. Worthington say something to Charlie. She is over forty, but still pretty, so attractive and gay, without trying to appear young or captivating, and has small, lovely hands. He flushed up to the roots of his hair, and then they both laughed so hard I thought they would strangle. The more I asked the cause of their amusement the more they laughed. I thought they were laughing at me, and was really annoyed.

"What do you think was the joke? Lieutenant Waring had kept wide awake and in an uncomfortable position for hours holding Mrs. Worthington's hand, under the impression that it was mine. I laughed until I cried, and the rest evidently thought we three had gone mad.

"I told Charlie that it served him right for not knowing my number six and a quarter from Mrs. Worthington's number five. Mrs. Worthington said that she would press his hand very gently, and, though she is a great sleepy-head, would not have missed the fun for any amount of rest,

and that if he is not her obedient slave henceforth she will publish his discomfiture far and wide. I shall tease him awfully about it when he gets into a sentimental vein. This is enough nonsense for one letter. We are going off for a little visit to Fort Granger. You know there is quite a town there, and we are actually going to have a german. The march (or dance) of civilization and progress is truly wonderful, is it not?

“ Affectionately,

“ BESSIE.”

In a fortnight the same party set off for Fort Granger. The general had to go, and during the summer he always found plenty of volunteers to accompany him. They were to stay a few days, have a “ good time,” and, if possible, induce some of their neighbors to return with them, so that the aforesaid good time might be prolonged.

Arthur was not to go, so Bessie found her position between her two quarrelsome admirers particularly difficult. She knew that Carsten’s attention was more for the purpose of enraging Waring than of pleasing her, and his amiable efforts were crowned with success. Bessie begged

Waring for just this once to keep himself in the background. He did so, but with a conspicuously bad grace.

The grand affair was to be on the second evening after their arrival, and she had promised to dance the german with Waring. The favors were quite unique, among them, a number of little snow-shoes, canoes, paddles, etc., made by an old Indian. The large barracks were cleared and decorated; flags, bayonets, and sabres making a gay and military appearance. The entire community was excited over this social event, and the Eastern belles were quite carried away with its novelty. Bessie's experience we will give in her own words in a hurried letter to Arthur:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—

"I am truly in an awful scrape, and you are the only one I can think of to help me out. I shall have to go way back to make you understand it.

"I told Mr. Waring if he would not devote himself to me beforehand I would dance the german with him. He did as I requested, but in a way that plainly showed he was ill-natured over

it. Several times it unfortunately happened that I had to choose between him and Mr. Carsten. I was as impartial as I knew how to be, but every time that I chose Mr. Carsten, Mr. Waring plainly showed his rage, and I knew that mischief would come out of it. After the dreadful thing was over, I was walking with Mr. Waring,—who was jealous as a Turk and cross as a grizzly,—when Mr. Carsten came up to us, and in an impudent way—that he never would have dared had I been with you or my father—asked me to walk into the supper-room and have some iced punch. I was going to decline politely, but Mr. Waring broke in with,—he was past the red heat: he was white and cool,—‘Mr. Carsten, you have evidently been appreciating the punch; Miss Lansing will stay where she is.’

“There was something said about being ‘found in the mess-room.’ I was frightened to death, and don’t know just what they did say. Mr. Waring left me with Mrs. Worthington. He did not say a word, and I have not seen him since. I don’t know anything about such dreadful things; I only know that if they are foolish enough to fight, I am ruined in the sight of all my friends.

I do not think the trouble was noticed. We happened to be a little apart from the rest of the promenaders, and the band was still playing.

"As some of the 'Grangers' are going home with us, and papa will have company for them, I will have no opportunity of seeing you, so I have written this, and if I have a chance will send it on ahead. You see it is a serious matter to be my friend. I dare not speak to my father about it. He would never, never forgive me for being in any way connected with a thing so disgraceful. I am very unhappy, what can I do?

"Yours in perplexity,

"B. L."

At the same time she sent a short note to Waring:

"DEAR CHARLIE,"—she thought that "dear" might have some effect,—“I beg you will do nothing about that affair with Mr. C. until we return to Fort Derby.

"B."

Waring wrote to Arthur, who received his and

Bessie's letters a few hours before the arrival of the parties concerned :

DEAR ARTHUR,—

“At last I have got the chance that I have been waiting for for months,—namely, to blow Carsten's few brains out; will you be a good fellow and stand by me?

“C. W.”

The party with their guests reached Fort Derby at the time expected. Arthur was bent on having the meeting prevented, but knowing the temper of the two men concerned, he knew that Bessie's intervention alone could stop it. Nevertheless he saw Waring; he argued, he threatened, he pled and reasoned with him, but nothing would induce him to change his purpose. He replied to Arthur's crowning objection, that Bessie's name would be made disagreeably if not scandalously conspicuous, that “that idea was all nonsense, as the quarrel would be put on other grounds.”

Arthur, out of patience and at his wits' end, and knowing the general's house to be too full of

company for any chance of getting a word with Bessie, wrote to her :

“DEAR MISS BESSIE,—

“That young beggar won't listen to reason. You are the only one who can do anything. If necessary be engaged to him, and when this matter cools down break it off. Do anything to ward this off for the present. C.'s friend is ready to compromise, but the ill feeling dates so far back neither principal will hear of an arrangement.

“I will do my endeavor, and let you know if things take a more favorable turn.

“Sincerely,

“M. A.”

Though Bessie was distressed and alarmed, she could not help seeing the ridiculous side of affairs, and when the pretty Eastern damsel, who rather prided herself upon being a desperate flirt, openly declared to Bessie that she was going to lay siege to Waring, and further remarked that she was “ready to fall down and adore his pretty

little feet," Bessie with difficulty kept from smiling, and could hardly refrain from running over to Mrs. Worthington's, telling of the impending social explosion, and having one more laugh before the final tragedy.

The evening after their arrival at home the general's little entertainment was to come off. Bessie grew almost desperate as the time passed without her having a chance to speak to Waring. He knew well enough when it was to his advantage to keep away. She sent word to Arthur that he must arrange to have both Waring and Carsten at her father's that night, then at all hazards she would arrange the rest.

They both came. "Yes," said Bessie to herself, "two skeletons at the feast is more than my share." Both "skeletons" avoided her.

It was late, and she had not yet had a word with Waring. At last she managed to signal to him across the room. He came to her immediately. She said, in an undertone,—

"I must see you alone to-night at any cost. If there is no other way, when the lights are out swing yourself up on the veranda roof and wait outside my front window. For mercy sake be

quiet and don't let the sentry see you. Go back now."

The guests departed, her father went up-stairs, and, after arranging her household matters so they would not look utterly hopeless in the near morning, with icy hands and trembling limbs she went to her own room. She did not dare light her lamp, thinking Waring might be already at his post; but the moon shone brightly, and through the open window she saw that she was alone.

She sat there waiting, knowing perfectly well what an awful risk she was taking. If the duel came off she felt she would be hopelessly compromised. Her father never would forgive her; and if either were shot—but that she could not think of. If any one saw Waring coming to her window that night—well, she would have to marry him, live in poverty, and perhaps, worse than all, grow to hate him.

It is not, as generally supposed, the sudden knowledge or discovery of sin that makes the young older or more worldly wise. That knowledge, like all other, comes by degrees. But it is when they first awaken to the fact that they themselves are liable to be judged by that false standard

of the world, "appearances," they start back horrified before their possible censors.

Bessie was overcome with horror at her own deception, but she was playing for a couple of lives, and perhaps a soul, too. If the stake is high, so must the risk be great. She heard the sentry walk down the path. The moon kindly hid her light under a cloud, Waring swung himself on the roof, and was in a moment seated outside of the window as arranged.

"Bessie dear, here I am."

"Yes, and you must promise me that this—you know what I mean—shall go no further. If it would be of any use, I would say let it stop for your own sake, but I shall have to be selfish and ask you to do so for mine. See what a risk I have taken. But in truth, I would rather have you seen leaving me here at this hour than have you raise your hand in such a foolish and useless quarrel. I assure you that if you are seen to-night, it will be no worse for me than it will be if this miserable thing takes place. As I cannot accept your love, I cannot appeal to it. I can only beg you to be generous to me and apologize to Mr. Carsten for your rude speech to him."

"Never, never! And he would not accept it: he would call me a coward. I would be a marked man before the whole army."

"Very well. It is better, then, that I should be a marked woman before the whole world. I hear that it is to be at noon to-morrow? Just call the sentry to help you down, *mon enfant!* That will make the whole thing consistent. And to-morrow, when you are dead, wounded, or, worse yet, missing, my position will be assured if not enviable."

Waring put his hand over his face, and, after a few moments' pause, said,—

"Bessie, this is the hardest cut yet. I will apologize, but only for your sake, and he will not accept it."

"Lieutenant Carsten will listen to you, that I am sure of. Now you must go. You are a dear boy after all."

He detached a little pin from the lace around her throat, the little bayonet with the ruby heart on its point, and leaned over to kiss "his dear sweetheart."

"Oh, no, no, Charlie; not here, not here."

"To-morrow, darling?"

"You have been very good; yes, to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Bessie, and to-morrow."

As the sentry paced his beat and chaste Luna hid her shining head from these improper proceedings, which we fear the less chaste sentry would not have done had he "suspicioned" them, Waring dropped lightly and safely to the ground. Bessie gave a sigh of relief. "Now for Mr. Carsten. He little knows the surprise I have laid up to keep him in order."

She wrote a note to Arthur, which she would send as early as possible, telling of her success with Waring, and enclosing one in it for Carsten, which ran thus :

"LIEUTENANT CARSTEN,—

"Will you be kind enough to call on me to-day as early as possible, certainly before noon? It will oblige me very much.

"I am, very truly,

"BESSIE LANSING."

Bessie rose bright and early after her brief and uneasy slumbers, and the notes were despatched. Like all very young people passing through the first great crisis of their lives, she was almost sur-

prised to awake and find all things as they were the night before. If her intercession and schemes had failed, how different the world would have appeared! at least to her on that beautiful summer morning.

How little we know of the slumbering volcanoes under our friends' feet, and what a surprisingly slight acquaintance they have with the "skeleton in our closet," though he is grinning at us through the door ajar, and deafening us with a devil's tattoo, played no doubt with his shin-bones! Our friends, thank heaven, neither see nor hear him, and we gladly persuade ourselves that these disagreeable manifestations are only apparent to our over-sensitive perceptions, and that he is not such a bad skeleton after all.

A Connecticut lawyer remarked to his wife, who, after commenting on the unfortunate publicity given to a certain family's private affairs, ended her little speech by saying, "Yes, but nearly every one has a skeleton in his closet," "My dear, I know that, but these people trot theirs out on the front steps."

Happy the man who keeps his under lock and key.

As in duty bound, Carsten obeyed Bessie's summons. Undaunted, Bessie stood in the parlor before him.

"Mr. Carsten, I am sorry to trouble you; I am going to ask you to do me a great favor. Will you accept Lieutenant Waring's apology which he will make to you to-day?"

"Ah, is that the way the land lies? What is the price you offer for his pretty head delivered safe and sound?"

Only the knowledge that she had the game in her own hands enabled her to control her rage at this man's vindictiveness.

"I will be ever grateful to you, that is all."

"As you have no other price to pay for your lover——"

"What did you say, sir?"

"For Lieutenant Waring. I tell you plainly that I will not accept his apology made through your influence to save his skin. I will publish him as a coward, and that will ruin him."

"Then I am to understand that you positively refuse to do as I ask?"

"Yes, most distinctly and decidedly I do."

"Mr. Carsten, it is my turn now. Please listen

to me. Some years ago, during one of my vacations, I was staying with a lady who was the daughter of an army officer. One day she brought down from the garret an old newspaper, and for curiosity we all looked over it. It was an old *Newburyport Gazette*. Among other notices was one that read something like this:

“BEWARE.

“All persons beware of harboring Lucretia Holmes, a bound girl, who has run away from Dr. Thomas Currie, U.S.A.’

Then my friends told me how this girl was strongly suspected of burning down her father’s house and causing the death of a child, whose death was sudden and mysterious. The paper they gave to me. I still have it, as it contains the death notice of a great-aunt of mine.”

“Well, Miss Lansing, I do not see how I am affected by this very interesting recital.”

“Wait a moment. Two days after this a gentleman’s card was sent in to my friend. ‘William S. Carsten’ was the name. As my hostess entered the room he said, ‘I beg your pardon, madam; I have come to make inquiries after Lucretia Holmes, an adopted daughter of your father,

Dr. Currie, of the army.' My friend, too hasty to ask questions, and too amazed to even think, caught up the paper that had been laid for safety in a table-drawer and read the notice.

"The man, she told us, seemed perfectly dazed and withdrew without a word. Soon after we saw among the list of graduates at West Point the name of William S. Carsten, Jr. You have called my mother a 'rebel.' I can call yours or your grandmother a bound girl and a criminal, and I have had occasion to call you a coward to your face. It is my turn now to threaten. If you dare touch Lieutenant Waring, if you dare call him my lover until I authorize you to do so, I will publish to the world this little bit of your family history."

Bessie fairly glared at her adversary as she stood directly in front of him delivering this lecture.

Nothing is more astonishing to a gentleman, or a man who has lived among gentlemen, than the honest anger and indignation of a woman. Carsten was frightened at Bessie's vehemence, and being a slow thinker, her quick sharp recital left him in a dazed state, and for a moment without a

word to say. Two thoughts only came to his mind. The first was, "She looks as if she would murder me if she dared." He turned white as he put the other in words and hardly breathed as he said,—

"Miss Lansing, Waring knows all of this, of course?"

"Certainly not. No one, not even my father; and no one ever shall from me if you accept Lieutenant Waring's apology and stop irritating him. You care nothing for me. You are attentive to me only to annoy him."

During the pause which followed, Carsten thought henceforth he would as soon take liberties with a Gatling-gun as attempt a flirtation with this terrible young lady. With an expression of relief he said,—

"Miss Lansing, you have let me off very easy. I did not suppose that any one was so generous."

"The world generally pays us off in our own coin. I never would have used this knowledge for my own benefit, never—never."

"Well, I shall try to profit by a noble example. I shall never annoy you again; will you shake hands with me before I bid farewell to you?"

"There is no reason why you should say farewell. You will do me a favor and I will keep your secret always. We may be better friends than we were before. Good-morning."

As she watched Carsten's retreating figure she saw Arthur approaching. He sat down on the shady porch, and Bessie told him that the whole matter was satisfactorily arranged, and that she had been so worried she was "most dead." The apology was duly given, and received cordially, and in the course of a few days the whole community was astonished at the politeness and good nature that had seized Carsten. Like many men born "under a cloud," he felt that for no fault of his the world was against him, and was always ready to feel slights and smarts where none were intended. That monster of wickedness, the "world," had for once treated him even better than he deserved, and he now had some hopes for it as well as for himself.

During the remainder of the summer everything went on without jarring. Arthur told Bessie "all the fellows thought Carsten was going to die or had come into a fortune, he was so devilish good-natured."

Waring was quite subdued; as Bessie had always the same answer he began to fear that his case was hopeless, but he would persevere to the sweet or bitter end as the case might be.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE autumn passed gayly with its walks, rides, and excursions, and only too soon winter came. Bessie was trying to make up her mind to tell Waring that he must arrange to be ordered off or exchanged into another regiment. It was not fair to let him stay on this way, wasting his time. It was not manly in him. If he had not sufficient strength of character to go—well, she had enough to make him, that was all. As he had been most exemplary in every way for a year, surely he could be trusted alone now. It was very pleasant to have him, very, very, but it must end, and now the sooner the better. How often when we are planning our little campaigns does the Great Commander of all forces send us to the right about and take the directing of matters into His own hands!

While Bessie was getting up her courage for her hard duty, the general caught a severe cold.

A bullet in his shoulder—his “souvenir” he called it—aggravated his malady. He was desperately ill a few weeks, died, and was buried. Not in the city of his fathers, but, like many soldiers, far away from birthplace, early friends, and family. One bitter day, in wind and storm, with the honors of war, he was laid to rest. A just man, who had never knowingly turned his back on a foe, a friend, or a duty.

Now the general's wisdom in bringing up his daughter as he had showed itself. All her girlhood he had looked to just this possibility. He had tacitly given her to understand that she was at liberty to do—within reason, of course—just what she chose, provided she was ready to suffer the consequences without murmuring. In a measure he made her regard life from a man's stand-point, and as he tried to impress upon her life's possibilities, he endeavored to fit her to meet them. He frequently said, “What a detestable set are these helpless people! They have to be dragged and carried through life, and when one is dragging them with might and main, they put on the air of sainted martyrs, instead of looking like the confounded nuisances they are.”

"Bessie, I would rather you were a—a—a—circus-rider than——"

"Yes, papa, with spangles and a paper hoop."

After the funeral Dr. Worthington and a couple of the other officers came to the general's library. Bessie gave them his keys and requested that they would examine his papers, and after all the business and military communications were placed in the proper hands she would give her attention to the private matters.

This terrible visitation had been so unlooked for, she was dull and stupefied. She was quiet, could talk calmly with her advisers, but when the outward stimulus was removed, felt overwhelmed with the isolation and loneliness of her position.

In a few days old Lucy came to her room to say that the doctor wanted to see her. He had come to say that the general's life insurance was so and so. There was a small amount in this and that investment. She was just twenty, and he could arrange so that she would "get on" until her majority. He then told her as delicately as he could that she must soon make some definite arrangements. His wife would be happy to have her with them, etc., etc.

How she dreaded the breaking up! She had absolutely no claim upon any one. Of her mother's friends she knew but the name. Her father was an only child and had left his home when a boy; his parents had died years before.

Bessie was twenty years old, with money enough to be comfortable, and was alarmingly free and untrammelled.

She thanked the doctor for his kind offers, but told him that as no one would be sent to fill her father's place immediately, she would remain in her own house and "take a week or two to think."

She had written immediately to her friend Mamie of her father's death, and now hoped fervently that she would write for her to come to her.

In as short a time as the letter could be sent and answered, Bessie received the longed-for invitation. Mamie and Mamie's husband insisted that she should "come East," stay with them, and then at their leisure her future plans could be arranged. She wrote that she was only too gratified for their goodness, and that in the course of six weeks they would see her and Lucy, for

whom she hoped they would find a comfortable lodgment.

All this time Waring was constantly with Bessie. He expected his orders any moment, but he had made her promise that she would not leave until after he had.

All the joy of her life was departing. While the last glimmer of light remained she determined, almost savagely, to enjoy it. Wasn't the future dark and lonesome enough?

Mrs. Worthington gently suggested that she and black Lucy should stay with her. Bessie knew that it was on Waring's account. She said quietly, but decidedly, to Mrs. Worthington, "No, thank you; I shall not leave the old house till I leave it forever;" but said fiercely to herself, "No one on earth shall cheat me out of the few weeks of happiness left to me; I'll be wretched enough to make up."

Though Waring had repeatedly been commanded to "have no hope," he almost thought at times that he was gaining ground. Bessie no longer concealed her pleasure at his coming, no longer read or wrote during his constant visits.

He sat in his favorite place on the deer-skin in

front of the wood fire leaning against her chair, sometimes with his curly head in her lap. She was too tired out to resist his entreaties any longer. She was responsible to no one for broken conventionalities. She had honestly warned him of his danger, and now, *che sarà sarà*. The world looked dark, and for the first time in her life she felt rebellious.

Time went swiftly by, and it came Waring's last day at the post. He had declined all offers of "send-offs," suppers, etc. Every one knew why, that his last evening might be spent with "his sweetheart." He entered the general's quarters for the last time. He and Bessie sat silently in the old place, both thinking of the first time they had met there and knowing this was the last. Quite suddenly he looked up at her and said,—

"Bessie, now that I'm going away, won't *you* give me a send-off? Read the Evening Service to me—I'll be very still, and you don't know but what it may do me some good—out of your old Prayer Book,—the one that you take everywhere with you. We will come over here to the lounge."

Bessie said, "Why, yes," and managed to keep

back the tears, as with forced composure she read as he had asked. The Psalter ended, "Oh tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be strong and He shall comfort thine heart." Bessie felt a hopeless foreboding that it would be a long time before their hearts would be comforted.

"Bessie, I believe parsons give the book they marry people out of to the bride; won't you give me the one I have been buried out of?"

"Charlie, you must not talk so."

"Will you give it to me?"

"Yes."

"Before I go make me one promise."

"Oh, Charlie, please don't."

"It will not hurt you; it is this. That you will not marry any one within two years; that you will wait that long for me."

After a moment's pause, she said,—

"I would rather not, but will on these conditions,—but you know it will do no good,—you are not to write to me or expect me to write to you, and that if you are fortunate enough" (here her voice almost broke) "to find any one who can take my place in your heart, you will do so, only let me know."

"You are always very generous, but in this case your generosity is unnecessary. Oh, Bessie, why can't you love me?"

He took her right hand, put her arm round his neck, laid his head on her shoulder, and told her again and again that he loved her more than all the world, and that some time she would understand what love meant and at least remember him.

They sat there silently for a long time: the fire burned low and threw its faint red light over the familiar room, and the old clock ticked off the few remaining moments that they had left to be together. As the usual hour came for leaving, Waring vowed that he would not go; if she had spoken truth, it was his last hour of happiness on earth. She finally had to plead, coax, and insist upon his leaving,—yes, she would kiss him goodbye, but he must go.

As he rose to take his departure, she said, impulsively,—

"Charlie, it is selfish and wrong, but I am going off all alone, and tell me only once again that you love me; I may never hear it from any one again. I *must* never again from you."

He said, "Bessie, I love you, and it is forever." He caught her in his arms, held her for a few moments as if he would never release her, kissed her, and as his voice broke into a sob, abruptly let her go and went out of the house for the last time. Bessie then threw herself on her knees by the old lounge, her face buried in the pillow so often pressed by the head of her handsome young lover, and gave herself up to an agony of tears and misery.

The next morning she and some others were up before the sun to see the detachment off. Waring rode up to the porch,—the old rendezvous of happier days,—where his friends were walking briskly up and down to keep warm. He looked very pale and very determined; his whole expression had changed since the night before.

He shook hands with them all, leaving Bessie till the last. He said very softly to her, "Thou art life and light to me, *adios!*" When he added the formal good-by, she said, "God bless you!—farewell." Then swinging himself lightly into the saddle, he rode away without looking back. The sun broke suddenly through the gray morning clouds, making the snowy plain a field of

glory, and in a flood of golden light our young soldier galloped away to other scenes and other duties.

Bessie insisted that her friends should come in to breakfast. There were Mrs. Worthington, the doctor, Arthur, and the major. It was the last time she could entertain them, as that day she began packing up.

The breakfast was despatched with cheerfulness, if not with the old jollity. Bessie wanted her friends to remember the house as it used to be, and so kept her spirits up. After breakfast, it being very early, the gentlemen took their cigars in the parlor while Bessie and Mrs. Worthington attended to the hanging of the old kettle. They drank to Waring's good fortune, and then, at Bessie's request, to her father's memory. After having made Bessie many offers of assistance, they dispersed to their various duties. Before the packing was begun Bessie sent for her horse, to have a ride in the cold, keen air. She needed something to compose her before her labors began.

She carried with her a peculiar and awkward-looking bundle. After a ride of a few miles up the mountain she dismounted. Tying her horse

to an evergreen tree, she cautiously walked to the bank of a high precipice and threw the poor faithful kettle down. Down, down, hundreds of feet, it slid and bumped, finding a resting-place at last. May we all rest as well at the end of our slips and hard knocks!

Oh, Bessie, foolish woman, you are actually crying over a copper kettle! But it was the one article in her possession that called to mind exclusively domestic and affectionate memories. Her father's swords and personal belongings she could see and handle without any particular emotion,—they were part of the world and its ways,—but the “campaigner” she could not look at without tears, and as for giving it away,—never should it be touched by human hands after that breakfast-party.

Bessie arranged in boxes and trunks the various possessions that were to be packed away; some were to be left at the fort until she knew what and where her life was to be. Being by nature and education self-reliant, and always having lived in that uncertain state, “subject to orders,” the vagueness of her future gave her no uneasiness. She was very, very sad, but had no more anxiety

about herself than an officer who is ordered from one station to another. In one of her two trunks that were to go East she threw one or two whips, one of the general's swords that had "seen service," the deer-skin rug, a certain broken spur, her photographs, sundry boots and hats, and her own spurs. "They will be a comfort to me if they are of no use. I would never dare to let any one see into that trunk, they would think me uncivilized."

Bessie left her own room till the last. Tom had fallen heir to the cats, and enough tackle and knives to make him rich for a year. The only breakable articles of value that she possessed were a pair of Chinese vases that were very old, and by a miracle of good fortune had survived entire through an adventurous and changing life. She shook out of one of them the usual accumulation of buttons, nails, screws, and matches that seem to have a natural affinity for deep mantel ornaments, as no one ever places them there or is able to account for their presence.

Out of the other fell a little box with the name of a well-known San Francisco jeweller on it. She quickly opened it, and found a beautiful little

gold cross with a star cut in the centre, in which was set a small but very bright diamond, and also a note from Waring :

“BESSIE DEAR,—Fearing some conventional idea would not allow you to take a gift from me, I resolved to steal a march on you. As I have no debts you need not think me extravagant, and do not imagine me starving in consequence of this moderate indulgence. It is the only thing I have ever given you, and you will not be cruel enough to refuse it when you know I may never see you again. Bessie, my heart is breaking for you, my darling.

C. W.”

Bessie kissed the cross and hung it round her neck. She brushed away a few tears that would come, and bravely proceeded with her arrangements. In a week she was ready and off. She told good-by to her friends with a brave face as she and old Lucy set out towards New England.

How many modern Pilgrims have found a grateful rest in that land of family homesteads, old traditions, true and kindly hearts!

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER her long journey Bessie found a cordial welcome from her friends.

Mamie had married at twenty, and now at twenty-five was the mother of a son and daughter, and mistress of a pretty rectory in a lovely New England town.

Being thrown in a circle of Mrs. Talcott's intimate friends, Bessie had to shake off her sadness by day, for the sake of her host and hostess; but, oh, the weariness of the nights! How continually she thought of her father, of her past "happy-go-lucky" life, of her graceful young lover, and her other army friends that could never in the nature of things all meet together again, never, never!

After a few weeks Bessie broached the somewhat delicate subject of finding a permanent home in Carrington, where she could still consider herself under the protection of these friends in need. After some pleading on Mrs. Talcott's

part and some remonstrances on Bessie's, it was decided that Bessie should remain six months with them, "paying her own mess bill," and after that time a permanent plan would be considered.

The business being thus arranged, Bessie became almost cheerfully occupied in arranging her new quarters. Her first improvement was having the chimney-place arranged for a wood-fire, and investing in such an enormous load of wood that one of the neighbors "wondered if the parson was going into the lumber business," and all the mammas wondered that their small sons returned home with legs entire, as the wood-pile proved such a fascinating object.

An obliging dry-goods clerk picked out a large box with a whole cover for our young lady, and very soon it was covered with bright cretonne, and kept well filled at the right of the hearth, *à la Fort Derby*. The trophies had all been hid, but now appeared in full force. The general's sword, the deer-skin, the Chinese vases, the broken spur, and all. The photographs, all but one, came from their seclusion, and a pot of violets, from the only florist that the town could boast, gave the room that inhabited and used look it had lacked before,

in spite of its pretty furniture and pleasant outlook.

Waring's picture never showed its handsome face to this gentle household. After the family separated for the night and Bessie had softly locked the door on friend and foe, the young lieutenant was put on the mantel-piece, the wood was put on the fire, a crisp light curl and a gold cross were too often taken to the fire-light, and Bessie lived over and over again the past year of her life. Waring thus became the centre of these reminiscences,—he was all that was left unchanged. She often truly wished that for his own sake he would change towards her, yet she thought he never would, and in these many quiet, lonely moments she almost heard him speak or felt his gentle touch.

Like many New England towns, Carrington was, in a small way, quite a literary centre. There were besides its regular well-read inhabitants always a number of law and medical students, perhaps one or two rusticated collegiates, or others making up "conditions," so with these different sorts of people brushing against each other it was not at all a place to rust in.

Mr. Talcott's rectory held about the same position in Carrington, as a rallying-point, that the general's quarters had at Fort Derby. While matters of church and state were solemnly arranged in that sacred precinct, the study, rowing-parties, rides, and picnics were planned in parlor and garden, and carried out with great success.

Before the summer had really set in, Bessie found herself interested and at home in her new surroundings. Her rebelliousness against fate had at least slumbered, and she was beginning to find new friends and new enjoyment.

Mr. Talcott had talked a great deal to Bessie about a classmate of his, "a lawyer, quite one of the rising men of New York; would some day make his mark; Bessie would enjoy him; Bessie must cultivate him, he was so clever, etc., etc. He had been abroad two years, the last he had spent studying at Heidelberg, and was now expected home almost any day."

Poor Bessie's interests were so in another direction that she took not the least interest in this brilliant youth, and could hardly listen to the recital of his virtues and accomplishments with becoming politeness. She inwardly resolved that

she had had all the trouble with men that she wanted, or was going to have, and hardened her heart against this friend of her friend.

One day Mr. Talcott came into his wife's room, where she and Bessie were sitting, to tell her that he had just had a telegram from this friend, Fred Lennox, and that he would be with them for dinner at six o'clock.

Bessie was so comfortable in this her first experience of settled family life that she rather resented the idea of an "interloper," and wished that this "chip from a German workshop" would continue to pursue elsewhere those mysterious pastimes known collectively as "studies abroad." She did not trouble herself to think of him, but her mind had independently conjured up a picture. A short, stout, awkward man,—his father had been a farmer,—and though she did not expect to see him in overalls and a wide-brimmed hat, she rather looked forward to meeting a slightly refined edition of the horny-handed sons of toil, a wise, heavy man,—heavy artillery. No matter who or what he was, he was entitled to see his friends, after this long absence, unembarrassed by the presence of a stranger. So after lunch Bessie

told Mrs. Talcott that she would take small Jack and Miss Howard (a pretty little blonde who lived just across the way) and go on the river. Mrs. Talcott expressed her agreement, told Bessie to tie Jack in with a rope so he would not crawl overboard, and admonished her to be home in plenty of time to dress for dinner. "You know Fred will be here, and we want you to make an impression."

That was just what Bessie had resolved not to do, so she carefully timed her excursion in order to reach home exactly five minutes before dinner.

She was in a black dress, white flannel boating-shirt, and black slouch hat. She had calmly donned that costume and walked down to the river as unconcernedly as she wore a forage-cap and a pair of spurs in the garrison days. The inhabitants of this quiet town were at first rather startled upon these occasions at the appearance of "that general's daughter from away out West," and had a misgiving that she might be "fast," a sort of unknown quantity only less interesting than a ghost.

After meeting her these misgivings disappeared, and then "the parson" in a New England town

would no more be accused, for long, of harboring any fast person, unless some unfortunate "Rustic" brought to him for godly admonition, than he would be thought capable of preaching against Apostolic Succession or the accepted liturgy.

At five minutes of six the trio appeared, and had evidently been laurel-hunting. Miss Howard said good-by on her side of the street, and Bessie and Jack, loaded down with laurel blossoms and ferns, walked slowly up the garden-walk.

Bessie's hair was in a most becoming frizz, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks glowing from her exercise. She was so much happier since she could live more in the open air. She looked fairly radiant as she marched along with her young cavalier, and all the time she was congratulating herself that she was looking like a fright.

She reached the porch where Mamie was seated arrayed in a spotless white dress and blue ribbons. She looked reproachfully at the "mussed up" beauty, but before she could speak the two gentlemen stepped out of the door. Before the introduction was over these two young people had been mutually surprised. From Mr.

Talcott's well-known mania for picking up "forlornities," Lennox, without even listening to the name, had expected to meet a deserted damsel of mature years, and Bessie was taken quite aback as she saw the real Fred Lennox and not her ideal.

A tall, slender, handsome man stood before her. His eyes and wavy hair were dark, his complexion pale enough to give what is generally called an "interesting" expression to his face. Though young, he was entirely past the boyish stage; his features lighted up with the brightest of smiles, while in repose his face gave one the idea of studiousness or thoughtfulness. There was no implication of carelessness in his bearing, speech, or dress. In five minutes one would recognize in him a man with an aim, who, while marching to that aim, would leave untried no honest way to get there, and who would keep himself well in hand during all his progress. He was "raised," as the saying is, on a New England farm, and cordially hated his surroundings. His parents, narrowly intelligent people, were sufficiently well off in this world's goods, and held on, with the desperation of a forlorn hope, to those remnants

of Puritanism which have happily become almost things of the past.

Master Fred, the youngest of six, was in one sense the black sheep of the family. The Puritan strain having been nearly exhausted in the other five, its only trace in him was a quiet, persistent, dogged purpose, but so very quiet and self-contained that its power was almost unsuspected.

As a child he read with avidity the scant and dry collection of household books. One day he came across an old volume of Patrick Henry's speeches, and he resolved that he "would be a lawyer and make speeches too." Though this idea was often covered over or put aside for a long time, it always served for the foundation of his air castles.

At nineteen or twenty, he was in college when the war broke out. His father, Mr. Abram Lennox, was a violent abolitionist. Being too old to go to war himself, he was loud and vehement in pointing out to others the road to glory. To his utter amazement, his son, whom he still considered a boy, took him at his word and joined the —th Connecticut. He remained in the army, with various adventures, for three years; then

studied law, and soon after his being admitted to the bar old Abram died.

For forty years this old man had been a great anti-slavery agitator. When slavery was done away with, either not finding a more sinful community or a more congenial topic, he directed his moral thunders to the Episcopal Church, and died just soon enough not to know that Fred had joined that "inlet to Popery." The current idea was that had the bishop's visitation occurred a few weeks sooner than it did, in all probability Mr. Fred Lennox would not have been enjoying his very comfortable inheritance. After a few years of wonderfully successful practice for such a young man, he went abroad to do some particular studying and become familiar with the German language. We have now given a very rapid sketch of his life up to the time we find him confronting Bessie this soft summer evening.

After the introduction, he gave Bessie one look of surprised admiration as he said, "Miss Lansing, I am happy to meet you." The words were quickly spoken but with perfect distinctness. Bessie was struck with his height and almost

soldierly bearing. She and Jack were only able to give slight attention to their toilets when dinner was announced. Mr. Lennox was most agreeable. Bessie wished that she had "dressed herself." After an hour on the porch the rain began gently falling, and the quartette were driven indoors. Bessie, wishing to leave the friends together, rose from her chair ostensibly to arrange an obstinate fern and piece of laurel, but in reality to beat a graceful and undetected retreat. As she stood by the low mantel Lennox turned abruptly towards her.

"Is it possible that you are a daughter of General Beekman Lansing?"

"I am his only child."

"Where is the general?"

"My father is dead, sir."

Lennox had "put his foot in it" as no thoroughly society man would have done, but got out of his difficulty as only an inborn gentleman could. He was on his feet in a second.

"Forgive me, Miss Lansing, but I can say to you now what I could not if your father was living,—he has always been my ideal of what a man and a soldier should be."

Bessie took an involuntary step towards him as she said,—

“Did you know my father?”

He answered, pleasantly,—

“Miss Lansing, you know that young second lieutenants are not as a rule particularly intimate with their generals. I never spoke to your father; but we youngsters signalled him out for our particular admiration. I can see him now at the head of his troops.”

After a short pause Bessie made her exercise an excuse for going to her room. Mr. Talcott made some remark about her not appreciating entertaining society, and she gave him a saucy good-night. As she turned to say a conventional good-evening to Lennox, he stood up quickly and gave her a regular military salute. Without stopping to think she returned it, and, blushing at her own nonsense, ran up-stairs.

That familiar salute, more even than the kind words about her father, was pleasant to her; it was as if a little of the old times had come to her again. As she was falling asleep after the pleasant excitement of the day, she could almost hear sentry No. 1 call out, “Ten o’clock and all is

well," and sentry No. 2 reply. As she descended to breakfast the next morning she said to herself that she and Mr. Lennox would be real good friends, but,—where was he? Gone on an early train to the farm to say "How d'ye do" for a day or so before coming back to town and work. Bessie unhesitatingly told her friends that she liked Mr. Lennox very much. Mr. Talcott looked delighted, but Mamie knew she was not one to be so easily captivated. In fact, that military salute had recalled very much, and Bessie felt a reaction from her liveliness of the night before.

CHAPTER X.

LENNOX soon returned, and made it his habit, after the day's work was done, to spend the evening at Mrs. Talcott's. He and Bessie had become the best of friends. He had a certain faculty of leading that almost fascinated her. Everybody deferred to him, and though he never raised his voice, he was always obeyed, and still more remarkable, his advice was usually taken. Without being vain or conceited, he had entire confidence in himself. As yet he had achieved nothing in particular, but still was considered successful. Kind-hearted and generous, he yet lacked that delicate sympathy, better described as loveliness, that men who have lived much alone so often lack. No one could help admiring or trusting him, and though women always fancied him, they were generally too much afraid of him to make more than the faintest attempts to attract his notice.

One September morning a messenger arrived to

inform Mrs. Talcott's cook that her mother had inadvertently fallen down the cellar stairs backwards (she was an Irishwoman), and Bridget left forthwith. Mrs. Talcott had had a few days' illness and was not yet down-stairs; thus Bessie found herself with the family on her hands. She and the little maid managed with the children and the lunch successfully, but when dinner-time came Bessie's heart sank within her. The range was an unknown complication. "A first-class engineer couldn't arrange those drafts." She would not disturb Mr. Talcott, who would not know anything about it in all probability, and did not dare bring Mamie down. In her despair a lucky thought seized her. She wrote a note to Lennox and sent it by the little maid:

"MR. LENNOX,—Do you remember enough of your army life to make a 'camp fire'? The cook did go; the range won't go. It is most time for dinner, and, alas, I have to cook it.

"B. L."

Lennox soon vaulted over the side gate, and said he would make the fire while Bessie arranged

the rations. Soon he had a good camp fire, and in due time a very comfortable dinner was cooked.

The two children were seated on the ground, and by means of dire threats kept at a respectful distance while the maid set the table.

During the preparation of the meal numerous juvenile neighbors ornamented the adjoining fences, and spread the news that "the young lady at the minister's was cooking coffee and frying something over a bonfire." When Mrs. and Mr. Talcott were shown the stove, they were as much amused as the small boys. The dinner was highly appreciated, and immediately after it was finished Mrs. Talcott was sent up-stairs, while Bessie and Lennox attended to the "camp utensils." After these unusual exertions they seated themselves on the veranda to cool off. Bessie was tired after her exertions as "company cook," and as Lennox was too much *en famille* to need entertaining, she sat perfectly still watching a cloud flying over the face of the moon. Lennox most unexpectedly arose, and, leaning over the back of her chair, without a moment's warning, said,—

"Miss Bessie, I want you to marry me. I love you!"

She was too utterly astonished to speak.

He had never even paid her a compliment before. Such a matter-of-fact, concise proposal took her breath away. He had not given her a loop-hole of retreat. Like everything he did, it was accomplished in the most direct and unmistakable manner. She stammered rather than spoke,—

“Oh, but I have not known you long enough; of course I do not love you.”

She did not say that to Waring when he smoothed her hair and dried her tears on that stormy night long ago.

“But, Miss Bessie, will you answer me one question? Are you engaged already?”

He was perfectly self-possessed, but his lips were tight shut and his hands clasped over the back of the chair.

She was not engaged to Waring; she had only promised to wait, and had told him it would be useless; but for the first time in her life she was tempted to deceive. If she said yes, it would be only half a lie, and would perhaps save them some misery. Instinctively she felt that she was not strong enough to resist this man as she had

the other, but she could not do violence to her honest nature, and, after a little hesitation, said,—

“No, Mr. Lennox, I am not engaged;” and added rather vaguely, “but it will make no difference.”

“We will see; I shall persist.”

Of course he would; he had persisted since he was six months old.

“I shall tell Talcott, of course,” he continued. “Good-night.”

He kissed her hand in the somewhat delicate foreign fashion, and walked down the elm-shaded street to his bachelor quarters. They looked particularly grim and bachelor-like to him that evening.

After his departure Bessie slipped quietly into her own room, and as she looked out over the broad river with the different boat-lights flitting to and fro, she felt herself a sort of traitor without knowing exactly why. With the cross in her hand she communed with herself,—

“Oh, Charlie darling, why can't I love you a little more or a great deal less? Why are you always in my thoughts? When it is so hard to have you from me, why can't I bring myself to

going to you? Will you come back in two years, or will you forget—forget?”

The following evening she received a note from Lennox. He was going away for a few weeks, and before leaving wished to impress upon her that his proposal was no sudden thing, but the deliberate result of his admiration of her beauty and character. With him it was she or none, and he begged her to remember this when he summoned up courage to ask her again, as he certainly would do.

Evidently Mr. Talcott was not to be informed of the state of affairs until the lawyer's return. The note rather piqued Bessie, there was such a tone of confident success about it.

“So he is going to ask me again! I'll not listen, that's all.” But she did, and this is how it came about. A few days after Lennox had gone the two ladies and the children were sitting on the veranda, enjoying the last precious moments of Indian summer. It was a hazy, dreamy October day, when the hills were all red and gold, the sky and water the purest of blues, and the sumac and golden-rod “made the place of His feet glorious.”

Their summer dreamings were interrupted by Mr. Talcott, who walked up to the ladies with the family mail in his hands. He teased Bessie about her missives, giving her two. She saw by the address that one was from small Tom, the other from Mrs. Worthington. The third he kept a few moments before giving it to her. She almost gasped as she recognized Waring's writing. While the others were reading their letters Bessie took hers to her own room, and with surprise and fear she opened it. It was so very unexpected, and coming so soon after Lennox's declaration, she was quite unnerved for a few moments and could not collect herself sufficiently to read it. The words danced and blurred before her eyes. It ran thus :

"MY DEAREST BESSIE,—

"You will no doubt be surprised at hearing from me, and more so when you read what I have to say,"—Bessie trembled and grew cold ; had he then forgotten, and so soon ?—"but I know that it should have been said long ago. In these few long months I have changed very much. As I rode away from you on that saddest morning of

my life, I was no longer a boy, but a man. Since then we have had two or three pretty close shaves from Indians and blizzards, and even when I thought it was all up with us, I remembered that I had not written to release you from your promise. It was very selfish in me to ask you to wait for such a good-for-nothing fellow as I am, and, besides, I cannot bear the suspense, so now I release you from all promises and ask you once more to be my wife, and I will *never* ask you again. If your answer is favorable—but I will spare you the oft-repeated tale,—God only knows what it will be to me. If it is not favorable, you need not fear my boyish and foolish threat of going to the devil. I shall try to consider it a just punishment and fight it out to the bitter end. Believe me, for your sake, if for no other reason, I will always try to do my very best, so perhaps some day you may be a little proud of me, even if you cannot love me. Oh, Bessie! what it is for me to write so coolly and quietly to you when my heart is breaking you will never know. Remember, whatever your answer is, I am yours only and always. Good-by, my darling! my darling!

“C. W.”

That night Bessie sat by her open window a long time after the lights were out in the quiet street. The hunter's moon rose full and beautiful over a bend in the river, turning it into a silver lake; the elm-trees hardly moved their graceful, sweeping branches in the gentle breeze as she sat there thinking, thinking. Perhaps her young soldier at his camp fire was thinking of her, too, at that moment.

Early the next morning she awoke from her uneasy slumbers and sent her last message to Waring for many years:

“DEAR CHARLIE,—

“Your letter reached me yesterday. It did surprise me. I cannot marry you. It is very noble in you to release me, and it is best, but I would have kept my promise if you had not written.

“You must not call yourself a good-for-nothing fellow. I have always found you honorable and true. In all the experiences that may be before me, I know I shall look back to the year you were at Fort Derby as the happiest of my life, and come what may I shall never forget you. I will

think of you always, and will know your whereabouts and will keep posted concerning you.

"I shall always be ready to help you in any way I can, and perhaps some day when we are older and have forgotten a little we will meet again happily.

"I know the weight of this falls upon you, but do not think it easy for me to give up 'my dear boy' forever. May God bless and keep you!

"Always your friend,

"BESSIE."

Bessie posted her letter and solaced herself with a long horseback-ride. She had written her answer with apparent coolness, but all the time the tears were falling from her eyes, and it took one hand to keep them from dropping on the paper. Some were for herself but most for Waring. Though she had been looking forward to this as inevitable for a long time, it appeared cruel to dismiss him so quietly, now that the time had come, and the unexpected manliness of his final demand almost shook her purpose.

Though distressed beyond measure at the parting, at the same time she felt a sense of relief, as

if a dreaded responsibility had been lifted from her life. She had done all through what she conscientiously considered her duty, and that was her only consolation in this present time of trouble.

When Bessie returned from her long ride she took the cross from her neck, laid it in the little box it came in, alongside the bright little curl, and with that spirit of fun that lingers with some few happy natures through all life's trials and afflictions, she labelled that last letter of his "Declaration of Independence," and smiled through her tears as she put it in a certain corner with her other notes. She still had every scrap he had written her. Now that it was all over, she set herself resolutely to looking for her happiness in her present surroundings, and bravely pushed aside the longings for the old life. They were not overcome, but they were not encouraged.

Lennox returned in three weeks, and with his quick penetration saw that, in some way, things had turned to his own advantage. In fact, Bessie was now free, and anything she chose to do had no suggestion of double-dealing to her strict self-scrutiny.

Lennox made the best use of his time, not in

the teasing, distracting style of Waring, but by gradually making himself necessary to his lady-love. He posted her in regard to the business matters pertaining to her coming of age, was always ready to serve and entertain her, yet quietly made way for the younger men who frequented this pleasant home. The idea of being jealous of them never entered his mind. In fact, he found watching their mild efforts to captivate this young lady quite an entertaining and amusing example of the fatuity of youth, and wondered if in years past he ever had been so asinine. As he recalled his three years in the army, before he was the age of these much-despised youths, he briefly concluded that he was not, or the Lord would surely have left his bones to ornament the field of Gettysburg or Antietam.

The Indian summer, the stormy winter, and spring passed, and when summer came, without knowing just how it came about, Bessie found herself engaged to be married to Lennox. She was a little frightened at what she had done. Her life was so entirely in her own hands, so entirely uninfluenced by any one's authority. It was quite alarming to take this step all alone.

After she had once pledged herself, she questioned herself over and over again whether she were capable of making this man's life and home happy. She did not consider herself sufficiently domestic, but as she looked over her acquaintances, she felt honestly that she was not inferior to many women who were good and useful wives and mothers. And why could she not succeed as they had? Yet she had some misgivings. She was always a little more reserved and subdued than ordinary in Lennox's society. She admired him immensely, and so loyally regarded him as the ruling power that she lost some of her individuality in his masterful presence.

The wedding preparations progressed quietly. Bessie was overawed. It was a little dreadful, after all, to give up one's freedom, that "personal liberty" that poets had sung and nations fought for, and be under the control of another. Though she really loved Lennox, there was that solemnity about taking an irrevocable step which always affects one who is not entirely shallow and frivolous.

But what really overshadowed her future was the thought of Waring's loneliness. If he were

consoled, how happy she would be. Like Fedalma, "she would not take a heaven haunted by shrieks of far-off misery" if it were offered to her, and it seemed almost as cruel to take a fair share of this world's happiness when others had little or none.

A short time before her wedding she wrote to tell her old friends of her prospects. Not one of them would be with her, and she realized anew how conspicuously alone she was in the world, and how restful was the strength of this man she loved.

She was puzzled about Waring,—it would be decidedly stretching a point to write and tell him of her engagement. There might be another in the case, yet she could not leave his finding it out to chance, so she wrote a long letter to Arthur, who was with Waring again, inquiring kindly after the old set and asking him to tell Charlie and her other friends.

Arthur kept the news to himself all day, not knowing what the effect would be on his friend. At night, as Waring was leaving his quarters, he handed him the letter. He read it where he stood, and with a half smile said, "So soon?"

He lighted a cigar, and after a short walk entered his room. He gathered together the few little notes and keepsakes, even the lock of hair, and heroically burnt them all. The little bayonet, which was always pinned somewhere in his clothing, and the Prayer Book, were all he kept. There were no boyish tears, no reproaches against fate or fortune. As he saw the few visible signs of his *grande passion* disappear in smoke, he said only three words. He thought of Bessie, and said "So soon!" of himself, and he said "Forever!"

CHAPTER XI.

BESSIE and Lennox were quietly married, much to the disappointment of the community, who had conjured up enticing visions of groomsmen and ushers in glittering uniforms, and started for their wedding journey. Bessie once more found herself launched into new relations of life. Lennox had told her that it would be necessary for her to visit his home for a few days at least. She was more than willing to do so. He gave her a most alarming picture of the monotony of country life, of the awful things they would have to eat, and capped the recital by informing her that his relations thought Episcopalians had horns and tails. She should not stay over a "Sabbath," as that would kill her outright,—no hot roast beef for dinner, no salad and beer at night, no loafing with cigars and pretty girls after the duties of the day were done, no frivolous talking of rides and boats for Monday morning.

In spite of his joking, he really feared his

young wife would find the first days of her married life most trying. He laughingly promised to reward her for conceding so sweetly to his wishes by taking her to New York and going to the theatre every night for two weeks if she wanted to, and hinted at unlimited supplies of ice cream, the offering with which he and Talcott usually placated their respective goddesses.

After a short railroad journey and a beautiful ride of a few miles over the finest of roads, the young people found themselves at the Lennox homestead. It was a large, white frame house, with the conventional green blinds. A beautiful elm stood at each side of the gateway, the far-spreading branches almost sweeping the ground with their waving tips. The path to the front door was in perfect order and quite unused, the one to the side door evidently being the ordinary thoroughfare. The front door was made in two cross-sections, probably a remnant of colonial times, when it was necessary to "view the landscape o'er" for Indians before venturing forth. The lawn-mower had been lately called into requisition, and, although the house and grounds had an appearance of comfort and hospitality, the pre-

dominating feature was that one of "orderliness or death" so eminently characteristic of New England homes.

Bessie was kindly received by her stern mother-in-law, but as she found herself in the parlor, amid the haircloth furniture, ancient mahogany table placed as exactly in the centre of the room as if located by an engineer, worked tidies and spotless Nottingham curtains, she felt like the chief of sinners. For years Lennox never tired of telling her that she was so frightened that when she took off her jacket she actually folded it carefully and laid it on a chair, a thing she had never done before or since.

The manners of the household had somewhat softened since its head had departed from this land of sorrows, and Bessie found it, on the whole, quite comfortable. Only two sisters were at home, the others settled in the neighborhood. Bessie wondered if they would all call upon her.

At an unusually early hour Lennox intimated that she must be very tired, and she should say good-night. Bessie wonderingly ascended to the "east room." Lennox followed, telling her she had outdone herself in amiability, and that she

was to read the rest of the evening, leaving the family to imagine her in a state of exhaustion.

The furniture was a source of unending delight. The chest of drawers almost touched the low ceiling, and contained enough mahogany to finish off a fashionable dining-room. Some of the drawers were left empty for Bessie's accommodation, while the others were full of any extra linen or bedclothing that she might need. The quilts, towels, and all lay there folded as if they had just come out of the dry-goods store, yet they had been in that house for years and years. The bed was an old four-poster. Bessie had read of them, but had never seen one before. It was hung around with a remarkable valance, representing, in red and white calico, a scene on the Thames near London. The bed-curtains corresponded, and she learned afterwards that the making of this and two similar sets, many years ago, was considered an era in the manufacture of prints. The bed was so high it suggested a large snow-drift. Her pretty eyes were reflected back to her from a long, narrow glass hanging against the wall. A small square was barred off at the top and ornamented with one of those remarkable pictures of

a weeping-willow of which our ancestors were so fond, some very blue water, an impossible boat, and several figures very badly out of drawing. Some old engravings hung perfectly "true" on the walls. The room had an air of preternatural cleanliness.

There was one modern article in the room, a beautiful white fur mat. Bessie would not have put her foot on it for worlds, and carefully stepped over it when it lay in her course. Her presence in this sanctuary seemed a profanation, and she imagined the consternation three or four pairs of muddy cavalry boots would create in such a household. She did not know that Abraham Lennox used always to take his muddy boots off before he entered the outside door that led into the sitting-room.

At an unconscionably early hour Bessie heard the family stirring. She woke Lennox, imagining some one was ill or dying. He informed her it was "confounded nonsense," and deigned no further explanation. He afterwards told her that it was the hour his father had always insisted on calling them, and they still kept up the habit. Bessie often wondered what they could find to do

that made them think it necessary to rise with the sun.

The whole connection called on the "new couple." Do you know, dear reader, what a call in the country means? It is not a five minutes' chat about the weather or the latest novel. It is a solemn and lengthy ceremony. If you are the caller, and a lady, you must dispense with hat and coat, be the hat ever so much pinned on and the coat ever so tight a fit. If you are a man, your cane and hat are at once whisked out of your keeping, and in that way anything like retreat is cut off. Your bridges are burned behind you, and all you can do is to make yourself as agreeable as possible under adverse circumstances. If you are a lady and called upon, get out your fancy work and your patience. If you are a man, think of it as a punishment for your misdeeds, and suffer calmly.

As Fred Lennox was looked upon as quite a hero and fashionable man in this austere community, and withal something of a backslider from the faith and manners of his ancestors, his wife was much speculated upon, and many were the visits of curiosity as well as of friendship.

Lennox, though fearing his wife would be awfully tired, could not help enjoying her perplexities.

An old gentleman asked her if she "favored her father or her mother." She turned to Lennox for an explanation of this, to her, incomprehensible question. She then gently, without a smile, said she was considered like her father; her mother was fair and small, and had been dead many years; she being always with her father, had probably grown like him.

"Was you with him much?"

"Ah, yes indeed! Would you be astonished to know that I have sometimes slept all night on the ground rolled up in a blanket, and often lived weeks in a tent? And you must not tell any one till I am gone, for every one would think Mr. Lennox had brought a heathen among you. I am quite a good shot with a rifle for a girl, you know."

Bessie was happy, and though a little quieter in manner than of old, her old playfulness had returned. The old gentleman was quite captivated with the relation of a few little adventures, and as he rose to depart, told her, admiringly, "I never saw any one so entertaining as you be."

These people, particularly the women, were a study to Bessie. Many of them so worn and old at an age when the army women, in spite of their anxious lives, were still considered desirable partners for the rare dances and frequent rides.

She had a tender feeling towards these people, who were weighed down with the monotony of their lives. Her wish to please was so entirely on their account that she soon won their hearts. She could not get over her astonishment "that people, whose clothes looked as if they had come out of the ark, had read everything."

The calls had been made, some few returned, and the last day of their stay was to be the "Fielding gathering." A "gathering" being a New England institution, Bessie had to ask for an explanation. She found that it was to be a reunion of all the branches of the Fielding family in the United States at the old Fielding farm. The present John was the sixth generation who had lived on the same land. The present Queen Anne country-house had been gradually evolved from the log cabin of the emigrant ancestor. This family had been in bad odor for two or three generations, as one Fielding, a Church of England

man, had espoused the Tory cause in Revolutionary times, and his sufferings for King George are no doubt duly recorded in "Sabine." In the old graveyard the pilgrim ancestor reposes, with this inscription on his flat tombstone :

" Here's a cedar tall, gently wafted o'er

From Great Britain's Isle to this

Western shore.

Near fifty years crossing the ocean wide,

Yet anchored in the grave

From storm or tide.

Yet remember the body is only here,

His blessed soule fixed in a

Higher sphere.

Here lies the body of Giles Fielding

Esquire, aged

67 years, who departed this life the first day of

September, Anno Domino, 1689."

The descendants, as many as could, of this man, were to meet together with their neighbors and friends, the Lennox family among the rest.

In one corner of the farm a grove of maples remained, and the ground under them was cleared until it was clean enough for a floor. Long boards laid on "horses" were covered with sheets

to make the table and loaded down with refreshments. The scene was a characteristic and very pleasant one.

For several hours the different vehicles came winding over the hills from all directions and in all varieties. There were all sorts and conditions of conveyances, from the spanking team of some fashionable New Yorker, who made it a duty to spend two months of the year with his family in the old homestead, to the ancient buggy whose bulged wheels and tattered top suggested immediate dissolution. The large parlor was used on this occasion. Owing to the traditions of the elders, it ordinarily remained hermetically sealed, being only opened for funerals and weddings. In it were representatives of four generations to receive the guests, the oldest, a lady of ninety-two, still in possession of her faculties, and the youngest, a tow-headed child of three, who was arrayed in pantaloons for the first time, and whom Lennox declared looked as graceful as a young cabbage.

By noon the company had all assembled, and Bessie, getting a little apart, was really entertained with the spectacle. She never in her life had

seen so many people together who knew each other, such different-looking people too, and nearly all related. A fashionably-dressed city miss would enthusiastically embrace a sedate elderly dame in a gown cut in a style years passed. A few city beaux made themselves most agreeable to their pretty country cousins. Bessie became quite absorbed in watching the numerous by-plays. One of these young gentlemen sauntered up to her and said,—

“I beg your pardon, but, as we are all relations, I suppose I may speak to you without an introduction?”

“Certainly you may speak to me, but I’m nobody’s relation. I’m” (she was going to say Miss Lansing) “Mrs. Lennox, only here on sufferance; that is, on an outsider’s invitation. I suppose you are a Fielding?”

“Yes; a New York branch of the family. The rest are abroad, and I was delegated to represent them. I have a year yet in college, and am doing up a little summer studying.”

At this moment Bessie caught sight of a woman in the biggest crinoline she had ever seen. She was ready to laugh at her, but this solemn and

gentlemanly youth evidently had no fun in his composition, and looked mildly shocked at Bessie's frivolous comments. Presently an enormous bell sounded from the grove, and the whole rank and file of the Fielding army, headed by the great-grandmother, walked to the grove, where the feast had been carefully and elaborately prepared. Young Fielding escorted Bessie; her husband, bent on making himself agreeable, was at that moment inviting three or four pretty girls to go with him to the "spread." Seeing that Bessie was provided for, he devoted himself to his admiring trio.

Fielding attended minutely to Bessie's wants, and seemed wrapt in a sort of respectful admiration for her. Though he was city bred and city educated, he had an air of ingenuousness about him that at first one did not know whether to attribute to real innocence of the world and its ways, or to consider it as assumed for particular occasions.

Besides the many people "like everybody else" near the table, they were joined by two or three rather peculiar-looking women, one of whom made some remark about "garden sass." This

upset Bessie's long-suffering risibilities, and she abruptly left the group to smother a laugh.

Now, one does not like to have his family laughed at. Fielding would not have shed a tear if half the "gathering" had then and there been gathered to their "Pilgrim ancestor," the hero of the endless speeches of the day, but he did not relish Bessie's amusement, and told her so with that cool effrontery that only belongs to those plain-spoken individuals who are utterly devoid of the sense of humor, poor things, and can never be counterfeited by the simply impudent.

"Mrs. Lennox, because you are beautiful and well educated is no reason why you should laugh at those less fortunate and hurt their feelings."

"Mr. Fielding, I never intentionally hurt any one's feelings in my life. I have seen so many funny things to-day, you do not know how hard it has been for me to keep up a dignified silence. Then as I am here on exhibition—my wedding tour, you know—and subject to criticism, I think I have a right to retaliate to a slight extent. I am truly sorry if I have offended you."

Bessie, fearing to become unpleasantly conspicuous by Fielding's prolonged attentions and to be

accused by her proper relations of a flirtation with Fielding (she might as well have tried to flirt with the old well-sweep on his ancestral farm), shot a helpless look at Lennox, and with that deceitfulness born of good society they managed to slip away unmissed from the company, but not before a damsel, whom Lennox had captivated, bestowed upon him a bowl of honey and a much-iced cake. Fielding had also seen the preparations for departure, and as Bessie was arranging her skirts in the phaeton, solemnly handed her a bunch of golden-rod that fairly glistened in the sunshine, and called forth a delighted exclamation of "How beautiful! how good of you!"

On the road home Bessie thought how handsome Lennox was and how everybody seemed to admire him. She was very proud of him, but did not dare to tell him so. She held him a little in awe, as she had done her father when he had his dress uniform on. They fell to discussing the day's doings. Bessie thought "it must be lovely to be one of a large family, have an old homestead and old furniture." Lennox was not so sentimental, and said he didn't want any more relations than he had. The last one adopted satisfied

him completely. He did not want to claim kin with any middle-aged ladies in shiny black silks and cameo jewelry that talked of "garden sass" and "meetin' seed."

Bessie shyly intimated that the three damsels he escorted to lunch did not seem to be conversing on those interesting topics.

"Yes, miss, and what were you doing with that stylish youth with the sun umbrella and kid gloves?"

"Doing? I was receiving lectures on my frivolous doings and sayings. I shall always think of that young gentleman as the last of the Puritans. He is a real city man, and yet is as ready to be shocked as if just let out of a convent."

"Do young men of the monastic persuasion generally present other men's wives with bouquets?"

"Fred, if you don't keep still I'll tell sister Jane how outrageously you flirted with that pretty girl that gave you the honey."

"Emblem of consistency and sweetness," added Lennox.

The next morning they made their adieux and left early for the six-mile drive. At the station

they saw the mild-faced "last of the Puritans." Lennox sedately walked into the smoking-car. Fielding did not smoke, so Bessie had to plead early rising as an excuse for weariness, and shut her eyes till Fielding had become drowsy, and she could enjoy unmolested the lovely scenery that they were flying through. Without accident the three arrived in New York "exactly on time," as Fielding thought worth while to inform Bessie.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING their engagement Lennox had had his eyes open in regard to a house, and soon after the return home from the wedding journey one had been decided upon. The inhabitants of Carrington called it an old barracks, but Bessie developed quite a romantic attachment to it. It was substantially built of stone, and in New England, where wood is almost universally employed for dwellings, this was in itself remarkable, and particularly so as the house had been built sixty years before. The rooms were large and, like the main building, square. A wing only one story high spread from each side of the house; the roofs of the wings connecting with the back veranda made a piazza one hundred feet long and fifteen wide.

The house had a cellar and sub-cellar. In the latter an alarmingly unexpected well was discovered. A winding staircase, steep and strong as that of a light-house, twisted itself through four

stories to the cupola. A door on each landing was the only way of communicating with that floor, and when this was locked the "flats" were as separate as in any new apartment-house. The rooms were square until reaching the third story, then they were divided up into small rooms, closets, and "lockups." One mysterious place filled Bessie's romantic soul with awe. Up in the garret was a large dark closet lined with boiler-iron, and the door was iron, with heavy bolt and padlock. She made this melancholy discovery herself, and almost wept as she imagined it the cruel abode of some afflicted one "with mind diseased." After Lennox heard the sad tale he informed her it was a smoke-house, and to substantiate his statement showed her its position by the chimney, and the various hooks provided for the accommodation of beef and bacon.

There were two large parlors, the wall-paper of which was quite remarkable. In the front room were representations in gray and black of "Lalla Rookh." One palm-tree was the whole height of the wall, and quite dwarfed the camels, pagodas, kiosks, and elephants, which, being drawn without the slightest regard to perspective, clung to the

wall like flies. In the back parlor, in the same style, was pictured "The Lady of the Lake." It became a source of great amusement to ask people, unfamiliar with the poem, to distinguish between dogs and goats, fire and clouds, etc. It was decided that these peculiar decorations should remain untouched. Though certainly sombre in color, they were interesting and peculiar in effect. The fireplaces were large and open, and the mantels very high.

When young Jack Talcott made his visits Lennox would set him on the mantel-piece for an ornament, and the child found himself so high in the air he dared not move for fear of falling into the fire.

The garden was a tangle of weeds mingled with rare trees and shrubs that had survived years of carelessness and neglect. Under the frame of the hot-house great black Hamburg vines, with stems as thick as a man's wrist, lay frozen to death winters ago. Wall peaches there were that had shared the same fate.

Above the first piazza was another large porch, only fifty feet long, that through the trees gave a beautiful view of the river.

Thus the back of the house was pleasanter than the front, though that looked upon a street lined with double rows of trees which met overhead, forming a cool, green arcade in the warmest of August weather.

The house had been deserted so long that the squirrels lived under the veranda roof, the bees made honey under the eaves, and the untrimmed trees were full of birds, the little English "ruffian in feathers" not then having monopolized the verdant creation.

Two modern improvements Lennox insisted upon,—a furnace and a modern staircase. "Any man might break his leg on that winding staircase, and so lose his reputation for sobriety and temperance, and his clients at the same time and forever."

The grounds, several acres in extent, were put in reasonable order, the sad vestiges of grapery and hot-house were sodded over, and the melancholy air of the establishment was quite done away with.

Lennox bought the house for a surprisingly small sum, and Bessie felt a new experience of pleasure. For the first time she lived in a house

that was really "ours," and where she expected to remain. It was big and substantial, not at all like the small sunny house considered suitable for bride and groom; but as Bessie viewed her half-wild garden, the river, and hills from her upper gallery, she had a sense of freedom, of the "grand air" that she would not have had in more contracted and dainty surroundings. She was congenially situated, but—but—well, she would have liked to have seen guard-mount once more.

Residing in the same town where she had lived before marriage, Bessie's slight change of location made no change in her friends. All were on the same footing. Before she had been married many months she was astonished to find how little she had of Lennox's society,—not nearly so much as during her engagement.

One wing of the house had been converted into a law-office, and though he was always near at hand, she seldom saw him except at table. Even in the evenings he was often much occupied. Not having a tinge of jealousy, he was constantly asking this and that friend to look after Mrs. Lennox at such and such an entertainment. He would "look in later." It was often just a "look in," and

Bessie came and went in a more independent manner than she ever had when a girl. Lennox never having been much of a society man, his friends made no comments.

Bessie slowly, sadly, but decidedly came to the conclusion that she was not at all necessary to her husband's happiness. That he had unbounded confidence in her she was sure. That he admired her was beyond question. That he loved her, in a way, she also knew, but it was not with the impetuosity she connected with the idea of love. He loved her as he loved all that was true, pure, and correct, not even as enthusiastically as he loved his profession. By degrees this idea became familiar to her.

They had been living some months in their house before the final finishing touches were put on paint-work and walls, and at last Bessie was able to arrange her room in the old way.

One morning, while dressing, Lennox made some quiet remark about her father's sword not looking very appropriate hanging in a lady's bedroom. Right or wrong, Bessie was furious; she turned on him indignantly, her voice trembling as she said,—

"Where do you suppose I'll put it? Yours I saw at your mother's among some old lumber in a loft. If I had a son who had ever carried a sword in an honorable cause, I would as soon think of making a drinking-cup of his skull as of throwing aside his sword. One would be as easy for me to do as the other."

Her eyes flashed a look of hatred at her husband as she walked deliberately out of the room. Lennox sank into a chair overwhelmed with surprise at the effect of his words. Bessie, meantime, was walking up and down on the other side of the house endeavoring to regain her composure. She was determined Lennox should see no trace of grief or tears if he came to her.

She would have taken down the sword if he had asked her to and given a reason; but to walk roughshod over her tenderest sentiments and not be aware of it was what distressed her. If he had spoken in a moment of irritation, or if the injury to her feelings had been intentional, she could have forgiven him, but for him not to understand what he had done was too much. She regretted her show of uncontrolled temper, but made up her mind she would never look to him for sym-

pathy or help, come what would. If he could walk alone, she could also.

After some little time spent in a vain endeavor to understand matters, Lennox walked over to the room in which his wife was standing, and said,—

“You must know that I did not mean to distress you, Bessie. I am very sorry.”

Bessie was so genuinely disappointed and unhappy that without an effort she answered, very gently,—

“Yes, I should have known it. Please forgive my bad temper. I know I am very foolish about—about the few reminders I have of a happy past.”

She said “happy past” as if she expected happiness in this world no more forever. Lennox waited a few moments. She said nothing more, and he left her. Those words “happy past” burned into his very soul. Though he did not understand her indignation, he had gone to her in all sincerity, reproaching himself for he knew not what. As he left her he felt himself, for the first time in his life, helpless before an impending calamity. Hitherto he had always been suc-

cessful. Men and circumstances had bent to his purpose. The spirit of this strong, self-contained man had but this once asked for bread. It was crushed and beaten down when it received a stone.

He went to his office and sat with his head in his hands for the bitterest hour of his life. As the last golden rays of the evening sun poured through his window he rose, and, turning his face to the west, said aloud, as if concluding a long train of thought, "Well, then, a stone let it be."

Strange as it was, even after this there was no break between these two. Bessie was guarded against herself and never surprised into unbecoming conduct again. She lived to herself, and for her that was comparatively easy to do,—not the heart-breaking thing it would have been to some women,—to her own mother, for instance.

Thus time went on. In four years she had her two children, who occupied her time and heart so much that the longings and disappointments would be stilled for a time. Lennox, who was a most exemplary head of the house, felt that he too was walking alone in a shadow cast from he knew not where. He was steadily coming to the

front in his profession. Bessie, by her pleasant manner and the adaptability coming from her peculiar education, helped him vastly in a social way. That he realized; but a strange feeling of jealousy came over him, jealousy in a wide sense, a jealousy of his own children, of the world in general. All found his wife so gracious, so lovable. She was so much to every one else, but allowed herself to be so little to him. He could not say where the matter was. She never neglected a wish of his. She never annoyed him with repeating a household *contretemps*. He was the most domestically unharassed of men, and he thought himself the most miserable. Though truly captivated with Bessie's independence and beauty, he had rather expected a partner more confiding, more commonplace, more like the women he knew in his childhood perhaps; and she,—alas! a husband more after the lover order. She managed the house and business, and Lennox always approved of her stewardship; but she would have given “worlds” (the only comparison women have when love is the thing compared) to have had him tell her that a dress was becoming, or even that it was not. His want of sentiment

was becoming more than hard to bear: it was becoming dangerous.

There was to be a party at Miss Howard's, winding up with a german,—quite an event in this small city. Bessie had been engaged for the german for some days, but hoped to go to the company with Lennox. A couple of days before the event she put aside her pride enough to say, “Fred, you will surely go to Miss Howard's with me, won't you? We have not gone out together and come back together from one entertainment this winter.” He said certainly he would, but at noon told her that an old lady had asked him to look after her and her two young nieces. There was no one else to take them. She was an old friend and a client.

“I told her you always had more admirers than you knew what to do with, so I will take them. Besides, I knew you could not stand going out with three other women.”

Bessie said, “*Eh bien*; but do not expect me home till the german is over.”

She made Lennox write to her partner to call for her. She had become too much a woman of the world to get in any uncomfortable entangle-

ment, particularly when entirely indifferent to the entangler.

That evening as Lennox left her to escort "the old woman," handsome, well dressed, and vigorous, as the door closed on him she said to herself, "You fool, do you not know many women are driven to the bad by less than this? Thank heaven I have two children, and this." And for the first time since her engagement she tied Waring's cross around her neck, and in a few moments started out with her escort, the best dancer in the town. While seated during the german, one of the ladies, not believing in monopolies, turned to Bessie and said,—

"Mrs. Lennox, how devoted Mr. Huntington is to you, and yet no one says you are a flirt. They do say you are so heartless that you are in no danger."

Bessie controlled herself admirably. "How kind of them!" was her only reply as she whirled off again. It was a home-thrust, this unkind remark, and cut deep. She could not forgive Lennox for helping expose her to this unjust criticism.

Huntington escorted her to her house, and for a long time she sat in her room in full dress. Len-

nox had retired much earlier, and to the other side of the house, so as not to be disturbed by the late arrivals.

That last german at Fort Granger came up before her. It seemed so many years ago—it was six—that the tragic side had almost faded from her mind, and she thought of it in a measure as a childish recollection. But as she took off the cross the tears came to her eyes, and she tied it again around her neck. All his keepsakes she had hitherto kept conscientiously out of her sight. She had never heard a word direct from Waring since the “declaration of independence.” Now she was impelled by her unhappiness to write to him, to find him, to know if he still thought of her. While sitting there in purposeless thought, she was startled by seeing the morning peeping through the clouds, and, partially undressing, flung herself down for a little rest.

At breakfast she tried, as she had often done before, to talk to her husband about the evening before. He had little to say about social affairs, and Bessie became hopeless about entertaining him.

Soon after this, one evening, she spoke to him

about some book. Having had a tiresome and aggravating day, he answered, impatiently, "I am tired of the sight and name of books."

Bessie relapsed into silence, and wondered if he would like to listen all day to the cries and questions of small children and the twaddle of a few callers, and not want a change too.

She had brooded over her troubles until she had become hypersensitive, and then, woman-like, concluded that she would never mention the subject again.

Soon two or three of the *habitués* came in. Mr. and Mrs. Lennox seldom spent an evening alone. As Lennox did not retire to the office this evening, the conversation turned upon a new publication. In the midst of the discussion Bessie had it on her tongue's end to cut Lennox by saying that he did not like literary discussions after six o'clock in the evening, and so to change the subject, but her nobler impulses prevailed and she said nothing, yet Lennox divined what was passing in her mind.

Bessie was more than ever bright and witty that evening. The visitors left in high spirits. Lennox retired to his office. Life looked lonesome and

hopeless to him. His wife was charming to all but him. He did not realize that he did not ever let her try, and Bessie looked upon him as non-understandable. Being so strong in mind and body it was possible that he wished for no companionship, and she ceased to try to be more to him than a good housekeeper and pleasant hostess. Yet she was proud of him and admired him at a distance. Sadly she saw her life was a failure. The knowledge that it was a fatality, not the result of any intentional sin of omission or commission on her part, alone gave her courage to bear up under her burden.

CHAPTER XIII.

YOUNG Fielding, Lennox's city relative, after a couple of years at the law, for which he was not fitted, had decided to study for the ministry. Fearing the distractions of the city, to which he was really not in the least addicted, he settled himself to study with Mr. Talcott in Carrington, and became one of the intimates of the big stone house. Bessie liked him, yet he gave her an uncomfortable sensation. He watched every expression and action of those about him, and, without being at all prying, had a most Jesuitical gift of reading people. Neither brilliant nor profound, he had the talent of closest attention, and, while remaining utterly oblivious to the great battles of life and society, he could describe the manœuvres of some few skirmishers with the minuteness of a detective. In spite of Bessie's being handsome and brilliant as ever, he noticed an indefinable change. Though her mouth still laughed and showed the glistening teeth, the gray

eyes were wider open and often sad, and she showed an almost fierce affection for her children.

Fielding realized that he had before him that most interesting and dangerous of studies, a beautiful woman with a secret. Without the slightest wish to force his way into this skeleton closet, he wished very much that the key was turned. His curiosity was by no means a selfish one. From a combination of peculiar circumstances—his mother's being an invalid for years was one of them—he had passed a most unhappy childhood. Thus he was instinctively drawn towards those who suffered. He saw very shortly that his friend was unhappy. To do him justice, he would have discovered it had she been neither young nor lovely. Bessie knew by the way he looked at her that he was divining her secret, and, more for Lennox's sake than her own, appeared particularly lively and gay when the "last of the Puritans" formed one of the cosey group, and hoped that she would never be surprised into betraying herself.

The spring came, and with it a change of prospects for Lennox. He had a first-rate oppor-

tunity to go to New York, and was ready to take it if Bessie would agree and could contentedly live within four contracted brick walls. He always consulted her in regard to his affairs. She said that what was best for him professionally was of course her pleasure, and though she looked with dread on the restraints of city life, showed no sign of faltering. After all, it did not make much difference where she was. It mattered to no one but the children. Waring must long ago have ceased to care. If the man to whom she had given all she could give found in her only an ordinarily good housekeeper and mother for his children, of course she was nothing to this boy after all these years. But, then, had he not said "forever"?

As the flitting was to be in the fall, all summer the piazzas, by night and day, were lively with the many friends desiring to have as much of Bessie's society as possible before her departure.

One evening as the Talcotts, Miss Howard, Huntington, Mr. and Mrs. Lennox were watching the darkening shadows on hills and river, and Bessie's thoughts were far away, Fielding appeared suddenly with a large bunch of violets.

With his usual directness of action he presented them all to Bessie, entirely ignoring the other ladies. They and the gentlemen exchanged amused glances. Bessie was brought back suddenly from her dreamings, and colored a little as Fielding handed her the flowers, for they fitted in so aptly with the subject of her reveries. She found a vase to receive them, and placed them on a little stand, part of the piazza furniture. Fielding had his back to the table, and as Huntington walked back and forth he would pose in apparent ecstasy before the flowers, casting ludicrously hopeless glances at Bessie. Lennox and all the rest saw the performance. Fielding was the only one who could not see the fun. Bessie was afraid he might see, and, having no sense of humor, would be mortally offended; so she managed, by rising and calling Huntington's attention to a particular sunset effect, to rearrange the group and cause her friends to settle down to good behavior.

Lennox and Huntington retired for some business talk, and at length all had gone but Fielding. Bessie thanked him again for the bouquet. He asked her why she did not put them in her belt as she did other flowers. The question was unex-

pected. She could not tell him "because years ago some one used to give me violets," so she answered, "I am very fond of them, but I would dislike to wear them,—I never do."

Fielding thought, "Here is a clue to the discontent or whatever it may be."

"Mr. Fielding, isn't this beautiful? How dreadful to leave this lovely view and picturesque old home for a house, a mere slice in the wall like everybody else's slice,—to hear your next neighbor take off his boots every night for years and not even know his name! You do not know what a trial it is to me."

"Why don't you tell Mr. Lennox? Perhaps he would not go if he knew how you felt about it."

"Oh, he asked me if I was willing to go. Of course I would not let him think for a moment that I was not. The life will not be a very congenial one to me. You know I am half a savage. A man's object in life is his profession, and I would never stand in the way of that."

After a pause, she added,—

"Women have ambition and love success too. I am quite equal to giving up my home, this lovely view, perhaps even my friends, without a

murmur for my husband's success; but for failure, ugh, how it would gall me!" And she stirred uneasily in her chair.

Fielding wrongly surmised that Bessie had married Lennox for his brilliant reputation, and was perhaps only receiving her deserts.

"Mrs. Lennox, it distresses me to hear you speak in this worldly way; you did not talk so years ago when I first met you,—a stranger would think you had no heart."

"Mr. Fielding, I am much older than I was then and know more. A heart is a great incumbrance, and the sooner it is disposed of the better. There come the other gentlemen, so I will not have an opportunity to horrify you again this evening."

These four night-hawks remained yet some hours out of doors. When the two married people were left together they discussed the New York plan in a matter-of-fact way. To have heard them one would have imagined them simply good friends talking over their business matters. Lennox said his office there would be out of the house, perhaps miles away, would she not be lonesome?

The words were on her lips, "When have I not been lonesome?" but she checked them: "Oh, no, with the children, housekeeping, and books" (and added, mentally, memories), "I will be quite contented."

Lennox had hoped that at least she would say she would miss having him near her. He could not gain an inch in her affections, yet he could complain of nothing. All the household affairs were conspicuously arranged for his convenience. The attentions she received from other gentlemen he more than approved of; in fact, they saved him time and trouble. Without a show of weariness she called on and entertained any of the "heavy artillery" there was reason or policy in propitiating. More than once he said that one-third of his success was due to the strength of his own right arm, the other two-thirds due to his wife. He loved her, but she disappointed him. Once long ago he had a dim ideal of what his wife should be. Now it rose distinctly before him. She should be loving, pliant, above all absorbed in him personally, his own to be loved, not the world's to be admired.

Bessie felt his disappointment long before he

did, and after conscientiously trying to find the cause and failing, gave it up as hopeless. And as even the love of children cannot fill even a good woman's heart, she allowed her remembrance of the young lieutenant to become to her a romance, a leading idea. Once she longed for and regretted him, as she had done her father and the incidents of her past life. Now, she regarded him as the one alone in all the world who cared for her welfare or happiness. She found her actions more guided by "what would Charlie say or think" than by any motive less remote. True to her promise, she had kept, as well as she could, the run of him, and had never yet heard of anything to his discredit. From Mr. Arthur she heard at rather long intervals. In fact, he had lately written that Waring was sobriety itself; he had turned scientist to some extent, and had received an honorary membership to a noted English geological society in consequence of some learned article he had written on the lava-beds of Idaho. He had also gained the reputation of being the greatest flirt, or more strictly speaking, the most graceful and successful defender of his bachelor freedom, in that branch of the service;

the vain efforts of various young ladies to secure "a button's worth" of attention being quite a diversion to his brother officers.

"There is still," Arthur wrote, "after all these years, a mysterious story of a disappointment, and these fair charmers consider this report as a challenge, and have tried to bring him up to time on several occasions. One very warm day, at a picnic, he threw back his coat for a little air. The little bayonet that he always wears pinned under his coat was exposed to view. One of these girls, very lacking in tact—(fortunately, such are few and far between), called out so as to attract the attention of the whole party, 'Oh, Mr. Waring, is that the charm that has made you invulnerable all these years, or are you the victim of some gay deceiver?' Most of us held our breath. Knowing Waring's temper we feared his answer, but he has learned self-control. He replied quite carelessly, 'Don't imagine me the hero of a romance. I have never been deceived,—that's the correct term, is it not? I cannot claim sympathy on that score. Once when I was very little I cried and kicked so hard for the moon that my gentle mamma made me one of yellow flannel, and it had to answer the purpose.

When I was older I once again cried for the moon. I got this to keep me quiet, and it has effectually. Some day when I resign on my laurels and a rich wife's money, I am going to have a coat of arms, moon d'argent, heart rampant.' Waring, with his forage-cap on the back of his curly head, his small feet (he is as vain of them as ever) in a conspicuous position, his blond moustache and dark eyebrows both turning up at the corners, looked the very personification of mischief. I know that girl was mystified entirely. She does not know, nor we either, whether he cherishes the memory of a certain young lady, whom we all loved more or less, or whether he is quite indifferent and has chosen science for his only mistress. This particular young lady was very rich, and we imagined when she left the fort she went away very sorrowful."

Arthur would have been horrified had he known he was helping rekindle an old flame. His letter fitted in only too well with Bessie's frequent reveries on the broad gallery in the moonlight.

Before leaving their house Lennox said they must give a party. It was to be a large affair, and all mere social obligations would be paid off, so

that he would leave town with a clear social conscience,—the only variety of conscience, he remarked, which lawyers were supposed to have.

Fielding looked aghast at this piece of impiety coming from a Christian and a vestryman. He could not understand these people. That they were doing good in their day and generation, and never turned their handsome faces from any poor man, was certain, but their remarks, taken by him literally, were sources of dismay and subjects of prayer.

About this time he undertook to break Fred Jr. of calling his mother "Bessie" (a disrespectful habit), and gave the mamma a solemn "talking to" about taking the child to church.

Bessie said he was too young to behave himself, but Fielding seemed so truly distressed about the matter that she consented to take the boy, if he would sit with her and see the result of the experiment. Lennox was to be in New York the next Sunday and would not be annoyed at any denouement, so if it was pleasant the boy should go. Sunday came, and Master Fred was arrayed in spotless white. He had on as few clothes as possible, the day being warm. The child, with

his dark eyes and fair hair, looked a perfect cherub. He sat perfectly still for some time. Fielding was pluming himself upon his success in "bringing up a child in the way it should go," and Bessie was alarmed at the unnatural quiet of "No. 1," that calm stage being usually the precursor of trouble.

Some time before Master Fred had conceived an admiration for the handsome contralto in Mr. Talcott's choir, so, after his quiet spell, he proposed visiting her then and there. He was given firmly to understand that that was not to be thought of, and he quieted down again, but in a few moments the congregation were startled by a crack like the report of a pistol, and people in the immediate vicinity of the Lennox pew put their handkerchiefs to their faces as if suddenly seized with a severe toothache.

Fred, in his desire to be big, and see his "lady luf," had, while Fielding was deep in his devotions, placed that gentleman's new silk hat on the seat, and seated himself on the upturned crown. The fabric gave way with a report that startled the child and amused the assembly.

The boy was then given a purse, and amused himself so quietly that he was again forgotten.

But after a short time Fielding, looking down in the bottom of the pew, saw a sight that caused his proper heart to cease to beat. This small cherub had begun to undress himself! The little socks and slippers were carefully placed on a kneeling-cushion, and the little blouse shirt, opening in front, was unbuttoned, and that with the attached kilt being dropped off, would leave little to be dispensed with. Poor Fielding clutched at Bessie's sleeve and, with speechless horror, pointed to the small sinner. Between amusement and annoyance the mamma was almost hysterical. She managed to redress the culprit, and at a convenient place in the service escorted him home.

Fielding's efforts at introducing reforms into the Lennox family were the source of much fun, and Lennox had a great deal to say about "bachelors' children."

Bessie gave her party, and it was a great success. To her delight some of her old friends were in New York and came down to it, among them Arthur, and he was to spend ten days of his precious leave with them.

The evening of the entertainment the grounds were hung with lanterns, the piazzas arranged

with drapery, tables, chairs, and rugs, the supper managed by a caterer, and Bessie found all things arranged with less trouble than she experienced at the fort in entertaining a dozen intimate friends. Lennox looked very handsome and dignified as he stood with Bessie to receive his guests. No one would have suspected him of the convulsing remarks he was making in his wife's ear. Her charming smile was oftener the result of his witty sallies than from the pleasure derived from meeting her acquaintances. He could always command her admiration if nothing more.

After the guests had gone, the host and hostess and Lennox's more intimate gentlemen friends (who had returned after going home with the young ladies) seated themselves to have their supper without interruption and finish up the rest of the night, or morning. Lennox, not wishing to go against public sentiment, had no wine at his reception, but now cigars and champagne were brought forth.

When Arthur and Bessie would begin their reminiscences, Lennox would put on a pathetic expression and ask how far they had gotten

through the history, personal and family, of every man in the service, and that he would be driven to desperation, or Canada, if they continued.

Arthur had arrived only a day or two before, so, though Bessie had asked him a multitude of random questions, she had got no detailed account of anybody.

After their supper was finished she said,—

“Mr. Arthur, our brilliant conversation is lost on these civilians, who pride themselves on their ‘souls above buttons.’ I suggest that we retire to the other end of this piazza.”

“Cavalry to the front,” interrupted Lennox.

“When I have exhausted you with questions cry quarter, and I’ll release you.”

They seated themselves comfortably, and, after a little teasing from the group at the other end of the gallery, nearly a hundred feet off, were allowed to talk over old times without interruption.

After some conversation, Arthur said,—

“Miss Bessie, you have changed considerably.”

As she leaned her head on her hand, her elbow supported by the railing, she was, in the pale starlight, ethereally beautiful. Her dress was

light blue silk and white lace, that seemed to blend with the starlight and shadows of the night. Her hair now was in a low, loose coil, so much more becoming than the disfiguring chignon of her girlhood. It was the reign of "tie-backs," and her dress seemed fitted from shoulder to train. Arthur thought he had never seen a more beautiful woman, and his heart ached for his messmate. He felt a pride in her, too, as one of "ours." What city could turn out a piece of physical perfection like hers, and where could be found a soul more noble and good?

"Yes, unfortunately, one cannot be twenty-seven years old and the mother of two children and look the same as at nineteen. You aggravating men improve as you grow older. We poor women are doomed so early to become old and uninteresting."

"I did not mean that you had fallen off in your looks. You have not. (Do not get one of your old attacks of dignity, for I mean to continue.) You seem more human than you used to. You do not look languid or worn, but now I can imagine you really tired and willing, under some circumstances, to be helped a little. At times your untiring energy

used to be a little overwhelming. You seemed to drive all before you instead of inspiring all to follow: When the chaplain came to Fort Derby, he casually remarked that he would 'rather be Miss Lansing's Prayer Book than her shoes,' but when he saw the much-worn condition of that ancient relic which you used to affect, he concluded you must have had personal encounters with his sable majesty, *à la St. Dunstan*, and used the book in lieu of pincers. Indeed, you strike me as being more lovely, if I may use a much-abused adjective, than of yore, and Mr. Lennox must be a happy man."

Arthur had never been a flatterer, and, in fact, by his just and open criticisms, had done much in old days to "keep her head level," as he expressed it.

Bessie had not heard a word of honest praise for so long that at this her eyes filled with tears. Apparently her husband considered her either above or beneath comment, and Fielding lectured her as one of the spiritually unwashed.

"Mr. Arthur, it is very kind of you to praise me. I hope I may always deserve it."

He detected a peculiar emphasis on the always.

At this juncture Fielding appeared, and Arthur gave place to him. Fielding, with his microscopic vision, saw the tears in Bessie's eyes. Not wanting to say anything personal, he rather mechanically remarked,—

“Mrs. Lennox, I have written my first sermon.”

“Yes; and what is the text? I mean subject; I hate texts.”

“Well, it's about answering prayer.”

“Nonsense!” she said, fiercely and unexpectedly.

“Whose prayers *are* answered, and what do *you* know about prayers?”

One foot beat the floor impatiently.

Fielding saw that he had raised a spirit not easily laid, and answered, timidly,—

“Why, Mrs. Lennox, do you think I have never prayed?”

“I don't know; but I do know that for six or seven years *I* have prayed for”—she did not know what to say,—happiness?—love?—Charlie Waring?—none of the multitude of words that flew through her mind expressed the idea, so she said, in desperation, “a man's soul,” and burst into tears.

Fielding's kind face paled before this, to him,

terrible revelation. He was astonished that she would acknowledge to him, to any one, that she needed help from even a source divine. The fact that she had prayed so long for anything or any one showed a sincerity of devotion he had never imagined possible in a woman who wore clinging dresses and drank champagne. Still, there was something shocking to him in the idea of a wife's praying so long and so earnestly for a man not her husband.

To pray for the unregenerate and heathen in the aggregate was a laudable occupation to be encouraged, but to pray for one especial heathen, particularly if he wore a United States uniform, as Fielding suspected to be the case, was an entirely different affair.

Good reader, you will find proprieties and religion often conflicting. By what moral theodolite will you determine the boundary-line where prayers for lovers should cease and those for husbands begin?

Fielding pictured to himself a hardened sinner, even a criminal, as the object of these intercessions. Arthur at once came to his mind as in some way connected with Bessie's tearful eyes.

But, no. He had been to a week-day service, and had not the air generally of one of the hopelessly lost.

Bessie quickly regained her composure, and, saying that she was desperately tired and must have some rest, walked with Fielding over to the others.

"Now, gentlemen, you are welcome to spend the morning on this veranda, but I am going inside. We are to have a shad-bake to-morrow. Mr. Arthur is to be initiated into a real New England pleasure."

A volley of questions were hurled after her regarding the time and place. She refused to notice them as she entered the door-way. The gentlemen, fearing the expedition would be at an early hour, hastily shoved back their chairs, threw away their cigars, and disappeared into their various rooms.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY were not up with the sun the following morning, and by the time they appeared for a very late breakfast the house had quite regained its every-day appearance.

Mr. Arthur was quite anxious to know what a "shad-bake" was. The only satisfaction he got was that one who had not been to a shad-bake had lived in vain.

The party assembled in the Lennox parlors. There were the Talcotts, Huntington, Arthur, and two or three young ladies. Fielding and Miss Howard were in her phaeton and loaded down with numerous wraps, baskets, buckets, and the usual paraphernalia of picnickers. Arthur declared he could carry on a summer's campaign against the Apaches with half the baggage. The party wended their way towards the river, a jolly, picturesque group. The gentlemen were comfortable in dark blue suits, and the ladies in blue boating-dresses and sun-hats, all but Bessie.

She had put on an old forage-cap to torment Mr. Arthur, who had grown more of an old bachelor than ever.

They soon reached the wharf and were waiting for Fielding. He and Miss Howard had been sent after the ice, and evidently the iceman had proved obdurate or hard to find. At last they appeared coming down-hill at an undignified pace. During this detention Arthur had had time to look around upon his surroundings.

At the foot of the wharf he saw a natty little steam-launch hardly large enough to be called a yacht, but large enough to be able to accommodate the entire party for an afternoon, or make a comfortable lodging- or sleeping-place for two or three gentlemen during a fishing excursion. Her name, "The Arrow," in red letters, floated from a pennant at the stern, and she was quite bedizened with small flags flying from the stanchions that separated the windows and supported the light deck, that served only for a shield against the sun and rain. Altogether she made a pretty picture.

Arthur recognized the gentleman who was called alternately "the skipper," "the commodore,"

and Mr. Elton, as a gentleman he had met the night before.

As he heard the little engine puff and grumble as if impatient at the delay, he noticed with satisfaction the grave and dignified face of "the skipper," and thanked his stars that there was one person in the party who knew what he was about. All the others only seemed bent on enjoying themselves. Even Lennox was thoroughly in the spirit of the occasion. When the phaeton had been unloaded, two or three pine planks, about three feet by one, came to light, and there were anxious inquiries for hammer and nails.

Truly, a picnic where the excitement centred on a couple of small planks, a hammer, and nails was a novel experience to our military friend.

They all got aboard, and Arthur watched the engine and company with interest.

The steering-gear had by an ingenious contrivance been brought aft, so that one man could steer, attend to the engine, and, if necessary, be fireman too. The "skipper" never lost sight of current, tide, or weather, and at the same time heard and enjoyed all the nonsensical conversation of his guests. They said he could see out of

the back of his head if his eyes were professionally occupied forward. Arthur's attention was not long riveted on the machinery. They were steaming down one of the loveliest parts of the Connecticut, where the banks were high and the stream narrowed. Some distance above they had left the long, high bridge having the longest draw of any in the world, a piece of work that caused Arthur to exclaim in admiration. After his eulogy on the structure he was quite astonished to hear Bessie say, "Yes, and the engineer who was the architect is a particular friend of mine."

"Well," said Arthur, "I would like to take off my hat to him."

"Lieutenant Arthur, behold your opportunity. Commodore, allow yourself to be saluted."

The "skipper" burst out laughing at the officer's surprise and confusion.

"Now, you did not imagine that I had sense enough to build a bridge, did you?"

"If I had thought at all, I should have imagined a man capable of that kind of engineering would not be bothered entertaining a lot of idle, noisy people like us. You must be good-natured as well as a good engineer."

At this juncture a large steamer was sighted coming round a bend, and the big and little boats exchanged the regulation signals.

Soon the Haunted House was pointed out. This was the sad ruin of a lovely villa built many years before. It had been sold for debt, and was now in the hands of a New York banking company. The miles of road and paths were overgrown. The house had been literally pulled to pieces for the leaden pipes and for firewood for tramps.

Just beyond was the site of some silver and mica mines. Fielding began a pathetic story about the man who invested in these mines and "lost his all." Lennox, who had been feeding Miss Howard with olives and hard-tack, and insisting upon her using some cotton waste for a napkin, casually remarked, "His micah was not among the prophets."

Fielding looked mildly shocked, and Lennox tossed him an olive as a "peace-offering," regretting that it was "not attached to a branch."

After six or eight miles of steaming they reached an island where the fishermen were preparing to haul the seine. The operation, though

familiar to most of them, was watched with interest.

The bobs of wood that floated the net, marked a dotted semicircular line of about two hundred yards, one end on the mainland, the other on the island. Some of the fishermen rowed to the shore, and two taking hold of the end of the seine, the others rowed the heavy boat back to the island, when their companions began hauling their end.

Soon the net was lying in two great piles on the beach, the bag in the centre full of floundering fish. As the sun shone on this glittering mass, they looked more like fish of gold and silver than of flesh and bones.

After considerable hard work, the men standing up to their waists in the water, the shad were brought to the land. All were interested in this good catch, as their dinner literally depended upon it. Huntington was despatched from the yacht in a small boat for the fishes, and was to bring them back ready for cooking. Miss Howard went with him to do the work while he did the talking. She took the oars while he turned up the cuffs of his blue shirt before venturing to do his marketing.

The shad being procured and the small boat made fast, the yacht steamed up the current a short distance and anchored off a pleasant spot with a good landing-place. High up the bank "Split Rock," a perpendicular rift so far up that it looked but a foot wide, seemed as clearly cut as if done by a man's hand, while in reality wide enough to let pass a wagon loaded with hay.

The rocks gradually lost themselves downward in a wooded bank, which finally terminated in a grassy slope near the river. A small stream, cold and clear, flowed down from the height over stones and fallen trees, sometimes fairly hid by the beautiful ferns and maiden-hair that grow so luxuriantly in New England, and again bursting out over the vexing rocks and boulders into a noisy, coquettish cascade. It was an ideal spot for these pleasure-seekers to pitch their camp, and from the gayety and laughter no one would have imagined care among the whole party. Perhaps if we lived in the pure air more we would take our cares more lightly.

Bessie, being unusually susceptible to out-door influences, forgot that she was unhappy. Such spots as this always suggested that most beautiful

of summers long ago. It was like awakening a gentle spirit of the past. The feeling of disappointment and rebellion that at times threatened to overwhelm her when between four walls touched her not in the free air.

The passengers were safely landed, then the baggage, and finally the "commodore;" the little "Arrow" being left all alone jauntily riding at anchor.

A spot to leeward of a great boulder was selected for building the camp-fire, and even the ladies helped to collect fuel.

While Lennox, bringing his army training into use, superintended the fire, Mr. Elton arranged the *cuisine*. Arthur did not dare ask any questions of this rollicking party, knowing his answer would be far from satisfactory. Still, he looked with interest for the part hammer and nails were to play.

The "skipper" proceeded, with Fielding's help, to cut up some salt pork in thin slices, each about two inches long and one wide, and as exactly done as if every inch had been measured. Then a shad was taken and split along the belly, and the backbone having been removed, it was care-

fully nailed on one of the pine boards, back against the plank. The flesh was then slashed with a sharp knife, and at regular intervals the small slices of pork were laid on, each securely fastened with a nail. By the time the necessary number of shad were prepared the fire was in good condition, and with a stick at the back of each board they were placed easel fashion with the fish towards the fire.

In the mean time Huntington had utilized the ice and lemons, and the ladies had spread the table-cloth, and all were anxiously waiting for dinner.

The shad puffed up with the heat to three times their natural thickness. The pork spluttered and crisped. These appetizing odors mingled with the aroma of coffee and lemons, and soon the experts pronounced the cooking an accomplished fact. The boards were carried bodily to the table and the fish served in alarmingly generous slices.

Each guest was allowed one thin wooden plate. Arthur had never seen these picnic dishes before, and was so pleased with them that Lennox suggested that Bessie and Miss Howard should paint him a fish set for his camp-chest.

Arthur declared, as his friends had at previous times, "that no one knew what a fish was till he had eaten a Connecticut River planked shad; that the first taste was a sensation to be remembered." Lennox gravely told him that the inhabitants of the river-shore were such ichthyophagists that they were obliged to undress downwards on account of the shad-bones protruding from their backs.

After the delightful meal was despatched, the baggage, which had materially diminished, was packed, and the group divided into couples and quartettes to lounge, smoke, or gather ferns and wild-flowers. Bessie had done the agreeable as the matron of the party, so with a clear conscience she started off with Arthur. They followed a path up the bank a short distance, and, reaching a shady spot near a subdued portion of the energetic little stream, they settled themselves to have a good "army talk." Bessie was all anxiety to hear of Waring, but Arthur had not as yet mentioned his name, so she gradually led up to it.

"Where is my dear little Tom? I cannot realize that he is almost a young gentleman."

"He is at the Polytechnic at Troy, and is doing nicely."

"And Mr. Waring, where is he?" She knew where he was. This was to introduce the subject.

"Oh, he can answer for himself." And taking out a flat pocket-book, of which the contents were most precisely arranged, he drew out a letter.

Bessie almost felt faint upon seeing the writing. The hand was more firm, more manly, than when she last saw it, but yet the same. The dreamy October day upon which she had her last word from him rose pictured before her as Arthur handed her the letter to read:

"MY DEAR ARTHUR,—

"You can't imagine the pleasure your letter gave me. It was a treat, old boy, though, I must confess, a small one,—about two fingers. To hear of so many of the fellows did me good. It's encouraging to know they have not entirely forgotten us. . . . If you should meet my old friend, Miss Bessie, in your wanderings, give her my love. I suppose that is no impropriety after all these years. Tell her that, owing to her early

and late instructions, I have developed into quite a respectable Episcopalian, and a lover of Thackeray, and that the way Ethel devilled Lord Kew at Baden calls forth my highest admiration. I am hoping next summer to have a leave and become, for a short time at least, semi-civilized. Our usual shop chit-chat I'll retail when there is more time, as the sergeant is waiting for me to finish. I inquired about that fellow that wants to be appointed agent at M——. 'He isn't worth the powder to blow him to the devil,' was General S.'s exclamation, so don't do anything for him.

"Yours,

"WARING."

Bessie read the letter, and though it was not a remarkable letter or very interesting, she failed to hand it back.

"Mr. Arthur, when you write to Charlie give him my love and tell him when he comes East we hope to see him. Now tell me all about everybody. This is the first quiet chance I have had. You don't know what a delight it is to see an old friend again! It seems centuries since I saw you

all. As I look in the glass, I wonder why I'm not wrinkled and gray, it seems so long ago. Then again, it is so vivid, it seems but yesterday. I feel sometimes as if I were two different persons all at once."

After a lengthy talk the two old friends sauntered down the sloping path and met the others. The full moon rose so early that they were to wind up the day with a moonlight sail and yet be home in time to have a good night's rest, to recover from the fatigues of the former evening. Bessie and Arthur managed to seat themselves at the stern outside of the yacht's cabin. It required some care to keep clear of the steering-gear.

They slowly steamed up the current as the moon shone down with the clear silver brilliancy of northern skies. Nowhere in the North do we get those golden caressing beams of the southern moon. To one who has known fair Luna in the South her northern rays are, as the great Frenchman says of "*la vie de la vieille fille,—tres belle, mais tres froide!*"

The river was turned to a stream of silver, and the dark forest-clad banks were reflected with

weird distinctness in seemingly fathomless depths. Every leaf, every twig, as well as boulder and height, looked down upon its twin brother. At a turn in the river a picnic-party came in view, gathered round their fire. The curling flames shot directly upwards in the still night, illuminating the background of high, rough rocks, and throwing into bold relief the bright dresses and pretty faces of three young girls, who were evidently engaged in making coffee. One matron and three picturesque young gentlemen reclined on the grass, just above the bit of sandy beach where two light row-boats were hauled up.

The beautiful night and the natural reaction from high spirits subdued the voyagers. Even the little engine seemed to catch the spirit of the scene and worked away under its breath. After a long pause, Bessie said,—

“This is like the nights we had in the mountains on our trouting expedition. Do you remember?”

“Certainly I do; and a glorious time we had.”

— Both sank into a deep revery. The silence was interrupted by a sharp report, probably a pistol fired on the shore. Bessie was so lost in thought

that it startled her, and involuntarily she exclaimed "Oh, Charlie!" and laid her hand on Arthur's arm. Immediately she saw her *faux-pas*, and knowing she could offer no extenuating explanation, attempted none. She had been uneasy for some time lest her unhappy domestic relations should be known to the world, and felt that the mortification would be too horrible to endure. She could easily keep her own counsel, but was afraid of being taken off her guard. She knew Arthur was safe, but she was more than ever afraid of herself.

The "Arrow" came up alongside the dock, and the party, after many good-nights and reiterated thanks to the "commodore," took their ways homeward. Arriving at home, Bessie immediately excused herself. Lennox and Fielding retired to the office, and Arthur, lighting a cigar, seated himself alone on the upper gallery to meditate on the affairs of his hostess. She could see him through the slats of her blinds, as, tilting his chair back against the rail, he seemed lost in thought. She had a wild impulse to call him to the window and tell him the whole story; but no, she must fight the fight alone, come what might.

She never would be conquered by fate. She read Waring's letter again by the moonlight, and sadly retired to her rest, saying to herself more than once, "No, he has not forgotten. Oh, Charlie, my darling, will I ever see you again?"

As for Arthur, he had come across the greatest puzzle ever under his observation. His great theory of existence and explanation of the inexplicable hinged on the idea that every one knew his or her own business best. In this particular instance his theory did not appear to be true. Lennox and his wife being of such high character, he concluded they were working conscientiously but at cross-purposes. Hitherto his ideas of domestic infelicity were where the wife irritated or the husband bullied. There was nothing unrefined or brutal here, but, nevertheless, a darkness that could be felt. She certainly could not have loved Waring. He knew he had been at her disposal at any time up to her marriage. Yet she had kept that letter. He knew it was not accidentally done, and she had involuntarily spoken his name. He determined to look about him for a clue to this mystery. As he rose to enter the house he glanced over the beautiful view, and,

as he tossed away his cigar, murmured, with a sigh, "Alas! and who of us is happy?"

During his stay of ten days he came to the conclusion that things in the Lennox family were in a very bad way. Lennox seemed exasperatingly oblivious to the best points in his wife's character, and she too foolishly proud to demand her just dues. After the devotion and attention which she had received from young and old men in those regions where young girls were rarities, his obtuseness appeared to Arthur most cruel. "Bessie evidently has the old general's grit, and will hold out—as long as she does hold out—without a show of wavering; but when she does give up, what then?"

Arthur did not like to think. He half wished he had not given her Waring's letter to read. He wished twenty different and opposite things. Before departing he intended to give Lennox one shot about the treatment of women. He admired the man and found him a generous and agreeable host, but he had a grudge against him.

At his last dinner during his visit he drew the conversation to the great regard the frontiersmen have for the few ladies it is their privilege to meet,

calling on Bessie now and then to corroborate his statements.

"Miss Howard, you may not believe it, but once I was out with my company to act as escort to a party of civil engineers who wanted to run a railroad over and through some impossible places. One day one of the fellows picked up an old sun-bonnet, probably pitched out of some emigrant wagon. It had been pink once in the dim past. None of us had seen a squaw, much less a white woman, for six months. Some man elevated this trophy on a pole, and we all joined hands and danced around it. Now, Miss Howard, if we forgot our dignity to such an extent over an empty sun-bonnet, what do you suppose we would have done if a pretty head had been in it?"

"Do you mean to say, oh, cruel barbarians, that you elevate girls' heads on poles as they did the traitors in Peter Parley? Be more explicit. When I was quite a child I was taken to see 'Macbeth,' and made to read the play before going. All through the evening I was looking forward to seeing Macbeth's head presented at the last on the end of a stick, and was quite disappointed when he died gracefully in plain view with Mac-

duff's ugly foot on his beautiful body. I may be gratified yet in my thirst for horrors."

"Miss Howard, I assure you, with us the picture is reversed. The ladies have their beautiful feet on our ugly bodies, and we rejoice to be tyrannized over."

Soon after dinner Arthur made his final adieux. Hours after the household was still, Bessie sat by her window. Tears would have been a luxury, but she rarely indulged in them. What would she say to Lennox if he found her weeping? To own to him that she wept on account of his polite neglect?—never! And in fact, he, poor man, would not have expected a tear from her on his account had he been dead and buried in that neat little graveyard by the side of his grim old father. With honest pity for her, he had long since come to the conclusion that he never had and never could win her love, and had adjusted his life to this conviction. Why she had ever married him he could not quite make out. Sometimes he suspected that her heart was out of her own keeping. But the difficulty was to reconcile this theory with the transparent truthfulness and honesty of her nature. For the most part he refused to think

about it. He bore himself toward her courteously, saw her fitful attempts to love him, and was secretly enraged that it should require an effort for her to do what he thought should be a natural and spontaneous delight.

CHAPTER XV.

EARLY in the fall, before those fortunate ones known as "anybody" were in town, the Lennox family were comfortably domiciled in their house in New York, not too far up-town. Bessie was so occupied with her arrangements that she had not time to miss her Carrington home very sorely.

Lennox had many friends in New York, and intimated to his wife that she was to remain, as she had ever been, the social head of the house, and cautioned her to keep strict account of all social indebtedness. By Christmas-time Bessie was launched into society, and before Lent came found it, in a measure, tiresome. The teas, dinners, and receptions were tamely alike. If they had each been sprung on her suddenly she would have enjoyed them, but to take her pleasure as it was laid out for her, day by day, gave it too much the air of business, and her unconventional spirit rose in opposition.

When the appearance of either her or her husband would fill the social bill only one would accept, Lennox saying there was no use of two of a family being martyred on the same gridiron, or, added Bessie, "steamed over the same tea-kettle."

Huntington came into the office with Lennox, and Fielding followed in a few months to take charge of a neighboring mission chapel. Lennox, of course, took a pew in a fashionable church where he could be preached to by a man of brains, worthy of his considerate attention. Bessie did what church work she could for Fielding's struggling little parish.

Lennox declared that the awe in which the young parson held Bessie was all that prevented him from showing out in his true colors as an advanced ritualist, and hinted at candles, colored stoles, and other paraphernalia that he was no doubt ready to introduce at the first opportunity. He suggested that he and Huntington should volunteer for acolytes, bothered the poor young priest about his cathedral, and addressed him as Father Fielding, until he would have considered Lennox as his sworn enemy if it had not been for the sub-

stantial aid given his work by that gentleman through his wife.

The Lenten season set in, and our four friends found it a decided relief from the never-ending engagements of the winter. By this time the arranging of work and performing of social duties, incumbent upon one's coming into a new city and expecting to keep well in the van of all things, had told severely on Lennox's constitution. A matter of business arising that made it advisable to go to England for a few weeks, decided him to take a two or three months' vacation, so that he could take a short run on the continent and see again some of his old university acquaintances.

The doctor had seen Bessie and told her it was quite necessary for Lennox to have this vacation, soon it might be too late; so when Lennox consulted her she did all in her power to start him off on his voyage, without allowing him to suppose that either she or the physician considered it a matter of such vital importance.

He insisted that even the advisability in a business way made him feel selfish about leaving his wife at home, and insisted that upon his return she should go away somewhere without

the children and take a rest herself. This she promised to do. Lennox steamed off for England, and Bessie found herself again entirely free, for the time being, to follow her own inclinations. In truth, she did not know whether she preferred her lord and master away from or near her. That she missed a moral and intellectual stimulus she knew, but she felt the relief that one experiences when an accusation is withdrawn. His presence was a continual reproach to her. She felt that in some inexplicable way she was blamable.

When Lennox left he put all his private affairs in her hands, and told her to arrange her plans for the ensuing months without any regard to his. She was more hurt at the evident implication that she wished to leave him out of her life entirely than flattered at the unusual confidence placed in her woman's judgment. Some days after his departure she was sitting alone and thinking (women really do think at times), "How can he expect me to be everything to him, as he does, and yet leave me only the odd moments of his time and attention? Yes, he should have a wife without an idea of her own, looking to him for

her very right to breathe, and with no power or desire to think for herself. How can he expect a wife who manages alone his children, his society, his income, to be a blind fool content with food and clothing?" She gave a costly silk train a contemptuous little kick, while she rose and began walking up and down her handsome parlor, as was her habit in the old garrison days when the world went contrary to her wishes.

Since Arthur's visit the summer previous, she was possessed with the idea that she must and would see Waring before many months. She thought if she could see him once more and hear him say "I love you" it would enable her to resume uncomplainingly a burden that, to her young shoulders, seemed greater than she could bear. She was treading on dangerous ground and knew it, but the knowledge only made her more reckless. Her tramp, tramp was interrupted by the entrance of a gentleman. He had been ushered into the parlor, and Bessie had not heard his footsteps on the heavy carpets. She turned suddenly and confronted a gentleman of her and Lennox's acquaintance. He made himself agreeable with chitchat as only men long accus-

tomed to society can do. The conversation turned upon the park and driving, and he asked Bessie to go with him to try his new span. The old groom would go as tiger, and all would be conventionally proper. Bessie's first thought was, here is a chance to have a taste of devotion once more, to be admired and considered; but she remembered that Lennox had never been anything but honorable and courteous to her, and that once she had heard Waring say "that for a married woman to flirt was low." So, on second thought, she told her gay friend that if Mr. Lennox were home she had no doubt but that he would approve of her going, but as he was not, and she so much of a stranger in New York, she must decline.

He disguised his disappointment as well as he could, and proceeded to make himself felt in a different way.

"Mrs. Lennox, don't you feel the responsibility of being left in this way, for so long, without any father or brother to depend on?"

"Oh, no; I am quite used to being both the father and mother of the family. Mr. Lennox always reads family prayers and orders the coal,

thus insuring a pleasant temperature in two worlds. This done, his household duties cease. I know of a youth, not overburdened with brains as you may imagine, who always spoke of his *fiancée* as his financier. Being the financier, I do not feel any added responsibilities. Really, I have quite a head for business. The Stock Exchange no doubt lost a brilliant star when I was made my father's daughter instead of his son."

"But you feel lonesome?"

"Very, at times."

A slight pause and Bessie reached for a portfolio of the "Dresden Gallery," as she detested this personal conversation. She held the book, handing out the separate pictures for the gentleman's inspection. Finally they were finished, and Bessie's very white and refined-looking hand was resting on the crimson cover of the portfolio.

"Mrs. Lennox, you have the most beautiful hand I ever saw, and," giving her a languishing glance that had melted many a heart of stone, "if I should lean over and kiss it would you forgive me?"

As he leaned over to carry out his amiable intention all temptation at flirtation, as a means of

revenge or excitement, vanished from Bessie's mind forever. She almost said "You idiot," but instead, raised her well-defined eyebrows and giving her well-set shoulders a little shrug, replied, "As you will do nothing so disagreeable, there is no use of our discussing the subject."

After this set back, our gentleman found it late and took his departure. Thus ended Bessie's first and last temptation to take up the *rôle* of flirt. For years Lennox and Fielding wondered at the intense dislike she had taken to one of the greatest ladies' men in New York. It was a long time before she enlightened them.

The spring soon passed, and the time was nearing for Lennox's return. His letters were frequent and interesting. His wife hardly knew whether she most wished for or dreaded his return, so she remained in her now usual state of *laisser aller*.

It was also coming time to make arrangements for that vacation for herself that she knew Lennox would insist upon her taking. Indeed, it was the condition of his going. Before she had thought of any plans one of Mrs. Worthington's epistles reached her, and she found her holiday all arranged. Some years before a wealthy gentleman

of Detroit had been in the West, and army officers in general and Dr. Worthington in particular had been able to do him some little favors. He had magnified these mole-hills of courtesy into mountains of kindness, and in return had put his steam-yacht, the "Mist," at Dr. Worthington's disposal for the summer. The men would have to be paid anyway, he said. He and his wife were to spend the summer in Europe, and he insisted upon furnishing the coal,—his business being in coal and iron,—so they would only have the mess-bill and incidentals to pay for. The yacht would sail from Detroit about July first for that indefinite cruise known popularly as "up the lakes." They would be gone about three or four weeks, and Dr. Worthington begged that Bessie and Mr. Lennox would join them. Her refusal would be a damper upon the whole affair. Mrs. Worthington drew a picture of the long talks of old times they would have together, and the doctor added a postscript advising Bessie to bring a trout-rod, if civilization had not spoiled her, and finished up with a sketch of the whole party on their knees in sailor clothes begging her to come.

Mrs. Worthington had enclosed a letter from

Tom. That youth was to be of the party, was rehearsing for "Pinafore," and evidently he had not proved faithful to "Miss Bessie."

"My singing in rehearsal No. 1 did not amount to much though," he wrote, "for the right girl was not on hand, and I could only sing with any real spirit, 'Damn me, it's too bad.' I was complimented by Il Signor for singing it the way it should be sung. How very awe-inspiring it is when one considers how little incidents in everyday life will help crown our efforts with success! In the present case, however, I would have swapped the crown for the girl any day."

The Pinafore girl was to be with them under her cousin, Mrs. Henderson's, chaperonage.

Bessie was delighted at the prospect of such a congenial style of summering. She wrote to her friends that as the steamer which was to bring Mr. Lennox home would not be due for three days she could not answer for him, but feared he would not be able to go. As he had made her promise to take a rest, she supposed there would be no doubt about her being able to join them.

Lennox arrived on time. Everything he did (except his marriage) seemed to turn out exactly

as expected. He looked rested and well, and was glad to be home once more. Bessie was glad to have him back, but all her thoughts centred in the coming yachting trip. To live in the free air again, to be untrammelled with no cares or duties for three or four long weeks! She could hardly keep from jumping or shouting at the thought of this respite. The children were to be sent to the house in Carrington. Lennox was to spend his time, as he could not possibly go on the lake journey with Bessie, between there and New York, and during his absence from Carrington Miss Howard and Mrs. Talcott were going to oversee the family affairs. Lennox was honestly pleased that Bessie had this opportunity. He told her to write to Mrs. Worthington that she could go on the one condition of paying her own mess-bill and share of the expenses.

By the time she had received the final note relative to route and baggage she had thought so much of her trip that she was nervous and almost ill, and her husband was quite frightened at her tired face and languid manners.

Five weeks had intervened between her husband's arrival and her start. She had tried to

keep up the enthusiasm of the first week of his return, but he had "loads of work to make up," and she plenty of occupation with her own and her children's affairs, and things drifted back into the old ways.

Fielding came to see her the evening before she left. He asked all about the journey, and then pointedly asked who the party were to be. She went over the list of names, but among them he could not divine which was the key to the skeleton closet he had been looking for for so long.

Lennox and Fielding saw her safely off from Forty-second Street. It was the first time she had ever left both husband and children, and in spite of the anticipations of the trip, when the leave-taking came she was almost ready to turn back. After the train had been going some little time, a very kind-looking woman leaned over the back of her seat and, calling her "Miss," asked if any one was ill that she was going to see, she looked so "sad-like."

Bessie had to brighten up and confess that she was going on a pleasant journey with old friends, but never having left her children before for longer than a day or two, she did not as yet feel

quite comfortable. The kind soul assured her it would do the "childer" no harm and her lots of good. "You do look pale, and I guess the city don't suit your health."

The words even from such a source were a comfort. If this plain, sensible-looking personage had reproached her with carelessness, or detailed descriptions of ailing children whose mammas were away enjoying themselves, poor Bessie would have felt herself a culprit indeed. In some moods how far a few words go towards lightening or increasing our burdens! Bessie was so gratified for this encouragement that she listened with polite attention to the dame's history of her linen duster,—how many journeys she had made in it, how carefully and repeatedly she had sponged it, how in consequence she had never washed it, and so never taken the shine off it, etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

BESSIE arrived at Detroit really more rested than when she left home. Before entering the station she threw off her duster, arranged her dress a little, and found herself fairly trembling with pleasure as the train slowed down to enter the depot.

While the cars were still moving, she went to the platform and caught sight of her friends before they did of her. Being too anxious to attract their attention to think of the proprieties, as soon as the roar of the train ceased she whistled out a bugle-call which had the desired effect, besides astonishing a very prim-looking gentleman who was standing near her. In a moment her friends rushed towards her, and she was hugged and shaken quite breathless. The tall, broad-shouldered youth, who embraced her with the vigor of a young bear, was still the Tom of old. The doctor and his wife forgot to introduce her to

the other members of the group, and she was hurriedly shown to a carriage before the mild excitement had cooled down. The doctor took her check. She had followed his injunctions and brought only her husband's steamer trunk, as baggage was to be light and costumes simple. Soon they were at the doctor's house, and after a fifteen minutes' rest dinner was announced. Bessie was too excited for retiring early, so the plans and *compagnons de voyage* were discussed quite late into the night.

One piece of news pleased, but also startled our heroine. At dinner the doctor had said, "Bessie, we are going to have your friend Waring for a couple of weeks. We will have a regular reunion, a sort of G. A. R. celebration. We will open our first bottle of champagne in his honor. We are to pick him up at the Sault, and if his leave is not extended we will have to hand him over to some passenger steamer to be returned to his owners. Carsten, by the way, is here at Detroit. He has a good wife and has developed into a nice fellow. Some miracle, evidently, was worked in his behalf. His surly devil seems to have left him entirely; his wife's good influence no doubt. Now, if Mrs.

Worthington took better care of me, no one knows to what heights——”

“Doctor,” interrupted that lady, “will you talk less and give Bessie some more dinner?”

July second, at nine o'clock, the party all met at the dock where the “Mist” lay ready to receive her passengers, the crew and stores being already aboard. There were, besides our four old acquaintances, the young lady after Tom's own heart, two young civilians, two young ladies, Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, of Troy (friends of Tom), and their two small children. Waring would make the party up to the even fourteen.

Little Miss Henderson was but eight years old, but a veritable *enfant terrible*. Tom said she saw more than a telescope and heard more than a telephone. The boy was younger, and harmless unless the small sister got possession of him. Then there were two of a kind.

Perhaps Mr. Tom's conscience was not always clear, but be that as it may, he held the cousin of his young lady in great awe, and from the frequent taxes she made on his pocket and patience, it was soon surmised, among this floating population, that she held a dire threat over this youth's head,

and thus levied black-mail as the price of secrecy.

The day was oppressively hot, but soon the breeze on the water was felt as the "Mist," with flags flying, steamed up the St. Clair flats. At this place, of course, the gentlemen aboard roundly abused the knowing ducks, who so rapidly learn the difference between a steamer and a shot-gun, who demurely paddle away from one and scare at the other, even if hid in the bottom of a small boat.

At sunset they were in Lake Huron, and at a remarkably early hour all went below to try their first night's rest on the water. The state-rooms were arranged on each side of the little cabin, which served also as dining-room, and at the end of the cabin on the port side was the pantry. The rooms were very small, but all declared them large enough for comfort. Some contained one bunk, some two, some were longer than others, so the final arrangement to suit tastes and sizes was quite a piece of work. Shawls were stretched across the door-ways, thus enabling them to leave the doors open and get more air. At first the gentlemen were given one side, the ladies the

other. This, however, did not suit all hands—or feet. The next morning Tom declared that when he woke at dawn he was scared at seeing something way up the bulkhead. Looking again he recognized his own feet, that had gradually climbed up in his efforts to stretch himself. He then tried taking the pitcher out of the washstand, which was at one side of the foot of the bed, and curling his feet over that. After upsetting the contents of the pitcher into his shoes, he concluded nothing was left him to do but to go on deck and look at the scenery.

Mrs. Henderson being very tall had arisen while it was yet night, and after alarming her *protégée*, the Pinafore girl, who, upon seeing her candle flare up, imagined the ship to be on fire, succeeded in taking from her trunk a backgammon-board, with which she pieced out her couch by connecting it with her washstand.

The shifting of the long and the short of the party began the merriment, which kept up without much interruption until Saginaw Bay put an end, for the time being, to the fun of the majority of the party, Bessie and Mrs. Worthington being the only ladies entirely indifferent to “the motion.”

After several stops at places of more or less interest along the west shore of Huron, the "Mist" reached Mackinaw, and gave an ear-piercing whistle as she made the dock.

The lazy life of the past few days made the young people very anxious for some exercise, and as it was yet daylight, two of the gentlemen were despatched to the hotel to find out what were the prospects for a hop, and, if extreme measures became necessary, to suggest one. Soon many of the hotel people strolled down to see the newcomer. The doctor asked them aboard. General R—— from the fort made his dignified appearance, and the deck was quite full of visitors, the ladies in the mean time having possession of the cabin, where they were changing their blue flannels for garments more appropriate for the anticipated hop.

They had their dance and enjoyed some of its novel features. At that time the upper lakes had not become as fashionable as at present, and in cases of emergency primitive customs were reverted to.

The band consisted of several negroes with their fiddles, who kept excellent time and tune. At in-

tervals they sang out in verse the figures for the square dances, for instance, in "gentlemen to the right,"—

"Farewell, my own Mary Ann,
Farewell, gents, for a while,
I'll come again, I'll come again,
And greet you with a smile."

The different social ranks represented in that boat ball-room were fearful to witness. It was a fact that in the same quadrille were a correct gentleman from Boston and the steward of a passenger steamer. The gentleman from Boston was spared the shock of knowing the occupation of his *vis-à-vis*.

In one set was a fierce Hibernian, whose restless blue eyes and blue-black hair gave him a wild expression. General R—— pointed him out as a Fenian Head Centre, and years afterwards the unfortunate, half-crazy fellow was hung in England. The next day at dinner he was heard inquiring, in a deep mysterious basso, for a "troifle of poi."

The walk back to the yacht after the dancing was a pleasant one. Bessie, being the odd lady,

fell to the care of General R——, an old friend of her father. As she stepped on board, she felt so light-hearted she hardly knew herself. Even her longing to see Waring had assumed a different aspect. It was as if the pure air and clear waters had washed out the bitterness of life.

The ladies generally went below first to make their preparation for the night. Sometimes the doctor and Mrs. Henderson left the deck quite early, the two older ladies following, leaving Bessie to do the matronizing for the remainder of the lot. After the first two days out the hour of retiring had become exceedingly late; there was plenty of time to sleep during the day, so these gay people quite turned into a club of owls and bats. The ladies were ready this night to go below earlier than usual; sitting on deck with the vessel tied to a ring on the wharf not being particularly conducive to romance. After they disappeared, the gentlemen arranged for visiting the Natural Bridge and Sugar Loaf Mountain the following day. As there was so much ahead to be done, they could not spend much time at this sacred isle.

By six the following evening they had quite done

the island, and, having had noon dinner at the hotel, were comfortably seated at tea at the cabin table. General R—— and several other gentlemen, whose acquaintance they had made in the free-and-easy way so natural to the much-travelled, had come aboard with them.

There were a number of jokes given and taken with that wonderfully good-humored familiarity that comes so quickly in a small community of tourists. In an unlucky moment Tom, lulled into a false security, attempted to "run" his small friend about a small youth in a sailor suit, with whom she danced the previous evening before being sent home at nine o'clock with the steward. There was an ominous pause. As they all knew of the maiden's sharp little tongue, they expected something worth listening to.

With her tawny hair waving, her brown eyes flashing, she said so all could hear,—

"Oh, Tom Campbell, guess you needn't talk. Didn't I see you kiss Alice Huston in the pantry? You were both stealing olives, and hard-tack too. I saw you through the crack of the door."

One shout went up from friends and guests alike. Miss Huston laughed as hard as any one, but poor

Tom was horrified, and blushed right through a generous coat of sunburn.

He confided to Bessie afterwards that he wouldn't have cared so much if it had been any place but the pantry. "That did sound so silly." But it was all true, alas, even to the olives and hard-tack.

During the remainder of the cruise, when there was any doubt about the locality where an event had transpired, or the whereabouts of a member of the party, some one was always wicked enough to suggest the pantry. Tom said, in spite of his good appetite, he wished there was no such place.

The next evening early they were to reach Sault Ste. Marie, if they got through the canal without hindrance. Bessie could hardly bring herself to believe that she would see Waring again. The plan was to go right through, only stopping long enough to shake hands with the officers from Fort Brady, leaving the shooting of the rapids until the return trip. The "Mist" passed through the canal and very slowly steamed up alongside the wharf.

The ladies had dressed up for tea, as this was to be the last stop at civilization for some time, now that they would leave the beaten track.

Bessie carefully arrayed herself in the light blue that Waring loved of old, and brought out a bouquet of wild roses that General R—— had presented to her, and that she had kept fresh in a vase improvised from a decapitated Catawba bottle which Tom insisted that the Fenian had sent them.

Just before the hawser had been thrown ashore, and as the voyagers were rising from the table, they were startled by the tramping of feet overhead, and excited shouts from men on the yacht and shore. Bessie completely forgot her own hopes and fears when she discovered the cause of the excitement.

The colored steward, Henry, being pleased at the prospect of a gossip on dry land before his duties called him to his dishes, had concluded to take time by the forelock and jump ashore before the "Mist" was made fast or the gang-plank run out. He jumped, fell short, and down he went between the vessel and canal wall. The dock was steep and high, and not a rope or ladder hung from the yacht. He was in a most uncomfortable predicament. If the yacht swung nearer the landing he would be crushed, and if she did not swing away a little he would drown, as he had no room to

strike out. Judging by his extraordinary contortions, plainly visible below the surface of the canal, treading water was not one of his accomplishments. The captain of the yacht had appeared on deck at the first shout, and quickly took a heavy hawser that was all ready to be thrown over a pile and carefully lowered it,—if flung, the danger of dashing out the poor steward's brains would have added to his misfortune.

After one or two frantic and useless clutches Henry caught it, and, putting head and arms through the bight, was hauled on board. The poor fellow was really a dark mulatto, but had been frightened into a subdued pongee color. He insisted, in spite of his haggard appearance, that he was "not a bit scared," and, after changing his garments and hanging his wet suit in the engine-room to dry, went about his usual avocations. Henceforth all were careful to wait for the gang-plank.

In the midst of this episode the gentlemen from the town arrived. All interest was so concentrated in poor Henry's impending fate that their advent was unobserved by the ladies. As Bessie raised her eyes there they were on deck, Waring

in front of them. Everything in the universe seemed to swing and shiver. The accident had startled her, and now the yacht seemed pitching under her feet, while sky and earth commenced flying round and round. Still she appeared perfectly composed, as she stepped forward and cordially shook hands with her old lover, saying, "I am so glad to see you." She did not dare to raise her eyes to his, and after his salutation to her he turned immediately to the Worthingtons and was introduced to others of the party. Only while he was talking to the others did Bessie dare look at him.

Considering the years that had passed, he was remarkably unchanged. Some few men keep their boyishness of face and manner after the character and disposition have toned down to maturity, and Waring was one of these.

In spite of remonstrances from the visitors, soon after the new passenger and his baggage were aboard the yacht steamed onward, and soon found herself floating on those clearest of waters, Lake Superior. It had taken the voyagers about this long to find how to make themselves comfortable. Some spare mattresses, and indeed, occasionally,

those in use below, were brought on deck and improvised into divans. Shawls and wraps were spread out, and though the party naturally paired off, there was a tacit understanding that the groups were to keep to a reasonable extent together, Tom and Alice Huston being allowed a little license in this particular.

This evening the divans were arranged as usual, and, after walking up and down the deck for a little exercise, and hearing the doctor say that the moon would rise in fifteen minutes (the doctor had been deputed "to keep run of the moon"), the party arranged themselves comfortably to make a night of it in a mild way.

Suddenly the doctor remembered the champagne he had promised to punish upon his young friend's arrival, and went below to find it. Waring went down after him to get his heavy cape.

Soon the doctor called Bessie to come and help him, as Henry, after his ducking, had been sent early to bed. She went below as he came up with the bottles. Waring was still in the cabin and followed her to the fatal pantry, where she was collecting the glasses and searching for the cracker-tin. He stood in the door-way looking at

her, his cap in his hand. A little of the saucy, boyish look had departed, owing to the now heavy blond moustache that turned upwards to match his eyebrows. He was dressed in *négligé* fashion, but with extreme neatness. The heat of the day having been great, his blue sacque coat was worn over a white shirt, the vest dispensed with; in fact, his comrades said "Waring wouldn't mind fighting Indians or starving on mule meat if he could only keep his hands clean and wear white shirts."

As he stood there silent, Bessie grew nervous and wished he would say something or go away. She knew she ought to speak, but was bereft of speech, and began to fear of sight, as the cracker-tin could not be found.

In reaching nervously for one shelf higher, the bunch of roses fell from her belt. The lieutenant picked them up and gallantly handed them to her. She examined the tin to see that she at last had the right one, and after thanking Waring for rescuing her flowers, proceeded to rearrange them. The fine thread, the only string procurable, had broken in their fall.

She would have offered one of them to any

other man in the world, but was a little afraid of how her old friend would take it, so she coolly and rather awkwardly bundled them together, and was just tucking them in her belt when Waring, looking her straight in the eyes, said, "Bessie, haven't you one for me?"

She lowered her eyes, but in that moment she knew it was still "forever," and she stammered,—

"Oh, yes; here is a beauty, the very prettiest."

"Well, pin it on, then."

She held the flower in her teeth while she arranged her own bouquet, and then, almost faint from the sense of the mingled happiness and danger of her position, proceeded to push the rose-stem through the buttonhole of her old lover's coat and make it secure. Her cheek was on a level with the blond moustache, her left hand could feel his beating heart, "the only heart on earth," she thought, "that beats for me."

The rosebud was fastened quickly. Waring put his right arm round her and leaned his head still nearer.

Women fortunately act from impulse, and generally from good impulse. If "the man who

hesitates is lost," what would be the fate of the woman?

Bessie put her hand over his mouth and the soft moustache, and gasped under her breath,—

"Oh, Charlie, my darling, have mercy!"

They then gathered up the glasses and cracker-box and proceeded on deck.

As they appeared, a volley of questions was fired at them,—

"Where have you been all this time?" "The doctor has been here ever so long," etc., etc.

Bessie explained that they had been in the pantry looking for the cracker-tin, and besides, the lid stuck and would not come off. At that there was a shout that really frightened our soldier, not understanding the witticism, and his face reddened in the moonlight. Numerous questions were asked him by the older gentleman, if crackers were the only refreshments he indulged in, if they were preferable to olives? to ask Tom, etc. Bessie, fearing a somewhat guilty conscience might in some way make him commit himself, as he already looked quite confused, said, quietly, "Mr. Waring, it's one of our jokes on Tom,—some time I'll tell you."

The champagne was now ready, and as the moon rose glorious from out the still waters, and the doctor proposed Waring's health, with the first glass came back many visions to this quartette of happy days long past. The short reverie they fell into was broken by one of the young gentlemen proposing a toast, "The pantry, the friend of the young."

Bessie chimed in, "The comfort of the aged." This ended the badinage, and soon all were hushed by the beautiful scene. Only the very shallow can chatter on a beautiful night on the water, or go into noisy ecstasies over a glorious sunset.

The lake from its vastness might have been the ocean. The water was perfectly still. The many becalmed schooners, with their sails silvered by the moon, drifting noiselessly on the waters, were idealized and beautiful. They suggested the idea of very good schooners who, after battling with the slings and arrows of an outrageous climate, if not of an outrageous fortune, and having carried with steadfastness and patience their disagreeable burdens of ore and coal, were now enjoying perpetual rest on the bosom of a calm sea, a sea of

that same white metal with which they had so often soiled their decks in its and their own unpurified condition.

It was a morning hour when the ladies retired to the cabin, even then declaring it was a sin to lose a moment of such a night. The doctor and Mr. Henderson had gone below some time before, and though Tom would not have owned it, he had nodded two or three times in spite of Miss Huston's fascinations.

The ladies were given about fifteen minutes' start for the turning in. After Waring came down and was arranging his small amount of baggage, Bessie heard him gently whistling "*O luce di quest, anima.*" She had a moment's temptation to answer it, but checking such a foolish idea, she soon fell asleep with the air still following through her slumbers.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER Waring's unpacking had been accomplished and the rest had become still, he carefully left his state-room and quietly went on deck. Throwing himself on the deserted cushions with his head on his folded arms, he tried to look calmly at the situation. He had dreaded meeting Bessie, and had almost declined the invitation on that account. It had taken him some years to resign himself to affairs as they were. Put himself again in danger and have the struggle over again he could not, but seeing her again in such a different position might it not be an effectual cure? So, after some conscientious hesitation, he had consented to come, and found himself in the hardest position of his life.

If Bessie had appeared happy and indifferent he would have been involuntarily repulsed, as he had expected to be. But when did an *affaire de cœur* turn out as expected? From the first when she would not look into his eyes, and from that

appeal to his protection, he knew that he had a place in her heart that he never before had suspected. The discovery at first almost stunned him, and then came over his soul a flood of bitterness. Some boyish stupidity must have stood in his way and taken the light out of his life. Why had he not seen years ago that there was some hope? She cared a little then. Oh, if he had had patience! What would a few months of waiting have been to the weariness of these many years and the agony of the present hour?

Then he wondered would it have ever been at all. In a chaos of troubled imaginings and unsettled convictions, he saw clearly but one thing. Come what would, her trust in him would never be disappointed. He would find an opportunity to have one talk with her. He would tell her his love was even stronger than before, because it was less selfish, and then leave the subject alone forever. He would never lower himself or her by making love to her. Still, an almost desperate temptation seized him to do so, for he felt she could not have strength to repulse him long.

It was as if they had changed places. As she used to curb and quiet his restless spirit, now his

duty was to watch over himself and her too. The duty appeared harder than he could accomplish, the trial more than he could endure.

While Bessie was slumbering in peace, her "dear boy," her "*cher enfant*" of old, was arming himself for the coming battle with fate, and only dared hope for victory.

The sun rose gold and red from a bank of gray cloud, bringing back faith and hope, as it always should, for is it not the emblem of Him who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness?

Waring, being physically and mentally worn out, slept so soundly that even the arrangements for breakfast failed to disturb him, and he did not make his appearance until the meal was half through. His chair was placed by Bessie, and she noticed the little rose was still in his buttonhole. She, being entirely ignorant of his struggle of the past night, joined with the others in twitting him upon his lazy habits.

As the sleepers appeared in the cabin, each one in turn had read a placard over the pantry door. No one ever owned to placing it there. Waring being the last from his room, the laugh was de-

cidedly on him, as all were by to watch his discomfiture.

“DANGEROUS! BEWARE!

“Oh youth beguiled of maiden fair,
With dark blue eyes and golden hair,
When in love's paths you gently hie,
Don't pass the sheltering pantry by.

“Oh soldier from the field of Mars,
You may receive here other scars :
Find dangers in a tin box lid,
And bombs in gentle crackers hid.”

Though he knew the others considered it a matter made of whole cloth, his knowledge of the peculiar state of affairs made him appear awkward under these various soft impeachments. Bessie whispered, “Do be careful; don't look so enraged,” and he put on an expression more suited to the occasion.

The cruise proceeded without any remarkable incidents. One day the small cousin succeeded in pitching down a hatchway during the operation of coaling. She was picked up unhurt, and Tom thought “only her ugliness prevented her death.”

They visited the fishery at White Fish Point, where everything tastes and smells of fish, either

fresh, salt, or stale. Even the cows, like those J. Ross Browne encountered in Iceland, eat salt fish, and their milk tastes of it.

Then came the Pictured Rocks, which they were called up to admire at five o'clock, while they shivered in a cold mist. Even the sea-gulls were chilly, and circled around the smoke-stack to get some warmth.

Passing the bold scenery of Grand Island and rounding Kewenaw Point, they came to a town that, out of regard to its amiable inhabitants, shall be nameless. Upon reaching this point it was decided necessary to stop and do some marketing. The last fresh meat was of such a peculiar description that no one could give a positive opinion as to what quadruped it came from.

The yacht's market-boat alone was to be sent ashore, as there was nothing of interest to be seen. Tom and Waring were going with the steward, Gail Borden "having become monotonous," as Tom expressed it. Each gentleman was armed with a milk-can, and Henry with discretionary orders and a large basket.

The town had a most desolate appearance from the dock. Not a human being could be seen, and

numerous were the queries over this strange state of affairs. After a couple of hours' absence the boat was rowed back to the yacht, its crew being in a state of mirth. The condition of the town was this. On the Fourth of July a Grand Steamboat Excursion had been arranged, but it rained, and was, therefore, postponed. Not discouraged, these enterprising Northerners had decided on another trial, and, as the skies were fair and seas were blue, the whole town had "arisen as one man" at 5 A.M., chartered the "Columbus," and gone off on this belated excursion. Only two live creatures had been left in the place. One, an old woman, who had been left in charge of the light-house, and who recounted this tale of the deserted village; the other, an old cow, with whom Tom was justly indignant because she was dry. The old dame tried to console him for the cow's deficiencies by liberal libations of raspberry vinegar, the wine of that country, and large slices of raspberry-pie; but this unamiable six-footer mourned over the empty cans and refused to be comforted. There was nothing to do but to anchor, and in the morning to go on another foraging expedition. The doctor suggested that with their one little

howitzer they would take possession of the town and astonish the natives on their return. At sundown the "Columbus" steamed slowly into the harbor, flags flying and the brass band pounding out of time. The excursionists all crowded to the side to get a view of the "strange sail," so rare in these unvisited waters. The light-keeper trembled when he first caught sight of her, thinking her "the supply," and wondering what the inspector said and did when he found "grandma" in charge.

One evening, just at sunset, they sailed through the Apostle Islands, that beautiful group unrivalled by even the isles of Greece. The air being so pure, the red clouds gave one the idea of a great conflagration. The heavens to the zenith were glowing like masses of flame. The high wooded islands with their steep rocky sides, and boulders at their feet, together with the flaming sky, were reflected in the lake, so that the vivid coloring spread over more than half the visible universe. As the spectators beheld that wondrous scene they held their breath awe-struck. If the world had begun then and there to melt with fervent heat, it would hardly have astonished them. The display was so magnificent! It was a relief to have the colors

fade and the scene tone down to less gorgeous and more earthly tints.

After sunset the different couples promenaded their narrow confines for their usual exercise before settling themselves for the evening lounge.

Waring and Bessie had without any consultation arrived at the same conclusion, namely, that as fate had thrown in their way a respite from cares and regrets, they would enjoy but not abuse the situation.

Waring was walking with Bessie, and said, "I must manage to have one talk with you alone. Will you let me?"

He felt her hand tremble on his arm as she said, "Yes, Charlie." As they leaned over the slight rail, a little breeze blew back his coat, and she saw once more the little bayonet and the impaled heart. She started as she saw it. Neither spoke, and he led her back to where the grouping for the night-watches was going on. Bessie saw the "odd lady" had naturally fallen to Waring's care. He was so careful in his conduct, so different from his old impetuous and selfish manner, that no one had had any cause to comment on his actions.

In a short time Dr. Worthington came aft from

a talk with the captain. He informed them that the captain proposed anchoring off the mainland next morning, where he knew of a stream where trout could be caught. Those who had not rods and flies would find grasshoppers good bait, and poles could, no doubt, be procured from some Indians who had a small settlement near the mouth of Raspberry River, as this creek was called. Waring and the Worthingtons looked at Bessie when trout were mentioned, as the recollection of the ambulance adventure in the Rockies came over them simultaneously. All laughed together, much to the mystification of the rest.

The doctor said, "Oh for the squeeze of a vanished hand!" and his wife, after glancing complacently at her own pretty hand and looking daggers at him, said something about "a voice that never was still." Waring's moustache almost touched Bessie's cheek as he whispered,—

"You must go with me; you will see how I have improved in fishing since you gave me my first lesson in that art. Do you remember our trouting long ago?"

As she drew away her head she raised her eyes to his and said, sadly,—

"I remember everything, unfortunately for us both."

At quite an early hour the next morning the party were awakened by the stopping of the engine and rumble of the chain, as the craft came to anchor. As they appeared on deck, they saw the Indian camp or settlement right on the lake-shore. The woods, though a second or third growth, were quite dense behind the small clearing, and almost hidden by the overhanging trees was the mouth of the little creek.

The Indians came out in their canoes, some having a few fish to sell, but most of them for begging or mere curiosity. One old man came out in a brand-new birch-bark canoe that he was anxious to sell.

Waring asked Bessie if she could still use a paddle? She saucily and confidentially referred him to the Connecticut River, so Waring hailed the old man, telling him to bring over the craft and get five dollars for it.

The old fellow grunted out that was not enough. The entire party were assembled to watch the bargaining. Bessie said, "Wait a minute," and soon appeared with the remnants of a dress skirt con-

siderably trimmed with sparkling jet beads, which she offered to add to the price. The old chief softened considerably, and, with a small amount of hard-tack and bacon "thrown in," the bargain was concluded.

Waring congratulated himself upon the small size of his possession, just room enough for the rods, gun, lunch-basket, and two people. He thought with satisfaction, "Bessie is the only lady here who would dare venture in it, and who wouldn't tip it over or put her foot through it if she did."

They were all to go ashore immediately after breakfast, and after visiting the Indian camp start up the stream. The yacht's boats and a couple of canoes hired from the Indians were enough to carry all the party.

The stout captain had gallantly volunteered to catch grasshoppers for the young ladies, and a short distance off, on a small clearing, he could be seen wildly plunging about after an invisible prey. Once he turned a complete somersault, much to the amusement of these cruel-hearted girls, who watched his undignified antics in their behalf with tears of laughter streaming from their eyes. Miss

Huston almost became hysterical in her efforts to subside as he approached them.

He returned hot, red, dishevelled, but triumphant. He had torn the leg of his trousers and burst the buttonhole in his shirt-band, but he had captured a goodly amount of bait. The doctor declared that the girls should mend his clothes, but Mrs. Worthington took that task upon herself.

The captain said that these Indians, some of them half-breeds, had not a very good reputation. There was a settlement of Moravians some miles inland, and when these Indians felt "particularly frisky or got particularly drunk, they went up and killed a Moravian or two." Though there was little to fear from them, the gentlemen took their pistols along, thus being prepared should they be inadvertently taken for Moravians.

The provision for the day was stored in the different boats and their loads told off, and soon the little fleet started. They tried at first to arrange to meet at lunch, but owing to the different draughts of the boats this was given up, and it was decided that every boat should be a law unto itself.

The captain, who knew the region well, cautioned them to return before sundown, as otherwise the mosquitoes would literally pick their bones. They were to time themselves up-stream, get an idea of the strength of the current, and all endeavor to reach the yacht at the same hour, well before sunset.

Waring and Bessie seated themselves in the canoe, flat on the bottom. The frail thing never could have borne their weight on thwarts. Bessie took the bow paddle, Waring the stern, where he would steer and so do the hardest part of the work. They shoved off, but in a few strokes had to ignominiously return.

Waring had either failed in steering or had not seen a small sand-bar, and owing to the distribution of the load the canoe was a little down by the head. So, as she started, the pitch had been scraped off one of her seams by the sand and she was leaking badly. They turned to the shore, but the Indians had seen the trouble before they had. Some fearful-looking old hags had already put a pot of pitch over the smouldering fire that had been suddenly poked into activity. The canoe was quickly unloaded, turned bottom upward, and

the leak searched for in true Indian fashion. Small papooses and all kneeled over the light craft, and running their lips over the seams, at the same time drawing in their breath, the defective spot was soon found. By this time the pitch was boiling and quickly applied to the leak, so in a few moments the canoe was again in good shape. The cargo was more carefully distributed, the bars more carefully looked for, and the voyage resumed.

Waring still clung to his white shirt in spite of the ridicule of his companions. He had at present dispensed with cuffs, collar, and coat, which latter garment was rolled up in the bottom of the canoe. As they entered the shaded stream, his cap was thrown off, a blue silk handkerchief was loosely knotted around his throat, and a buckskin belt, of very beautiful workmanship, which held a very small pistol and very big knife, was buckled around his waist, and formed a remarkable contrast to the very civilized and carefully laundried "bosom-shirt."

Bessie had also laid aside her hat, ornamented as in days of yore with leaders and flies. A loose blouse-shirt gave play to her arms, and the broad

collar being open at the throat, her handsome figure had perfect freedom. Her black skirt was carefully tucked about her as she sat, Indian fashion, handling her paddle. The only relief to her sombre dress was a scarlet handkerchief tied around her neck. After a few attempts they got in stroke, and in spite of their delay soon caught up with and then passed the heavier boats. The others admired the two handsome young faces and trim figures swinging so gracefully in perfect time. As the little craft floated so quickly and noiselessly by, leaving the others far behind, for the first time an uneasy expression passed over Mrs. Worthington's face.

After paddling some distance up-stream, Waring proposed to begin fishing. He said it was not very sociable only having Bessie's back to look at. They moved very carefully, not wishing to fulfil their friends' prophecy of tipping over, or putting a foot through their "egg-shell."

The rods were jointed and the sport began. As the stream had become quite narrow, with numerous rocks and boulders, and the trees met overhead, a clear cast was impossible, so our fishers had to be satisfied with trailing the flies lightly

over the water. Waring had the first "rise," but Bessie caught the first trout. She insisted upon attending to her own line, so at the end they could tell honestly who had got the most fish.

After the usual experimenting with various flies they decided upon a certain variety, and as after some good luck the rises became scarcer, they continued up-stream, finding some auspicious looking "holes" that would have been passed over by less experienced sportsmen. They succeeded while it was yet early in the day in procuring a fine string. Waring was convinced they had enough to prevent his "being given away,"—as Tom would have remarked in his favorite vernacular,—and as the small boat had become rather cramping, he suggested that they should go ashore, have lunch, and "loaf the rest of the day." Bessie proposed landing where they were, but Waring objected, without giving any reason. He said they must go up the stream some distance farther; so up they went another half-mile where it was very shallow, and made their landing. As Bessie stepped from the canoe she said,—

"Charlie, why did you insist upon coming all the way up here, if you were cramped before?"

He held her hand as he helped her out.

"Well, I'll tell you. The heavy boats can't follow us up here, and I am going to have you all for myself once, and for the last time. I feel it is for the last time, forever, Bessie, forever—forever. You need not look so frightened. I am not going to murder you or even tease you; I have something to say to you, but that will not bother you long. I am going to have you to look at and think about, that is all, to be free, to be off my guard, to imagine we are alone in the universe for a few short hours, then to begin over again my lonely life."

The canoe was again unpacked and carefully lifted up on the little beach. After putting the trout in the shade covered with wet leaves, and a primitive washing of hands in the small creek, they seated themselves in true picnic fashion to a generous luncheon prepared by the amiable Henry.

Bessie was half sorry, and felt a little guilty, that she had placed herself in a position from which there was no retreat, but it was the last time, forever, and if the penalty might have been death instead of only an impropriety, she would have risked it.

She kept up a running fire of conversation, vainly hoping to divert Waring's attention from anything serious that he might have to say.

After their repast he seated her in the shade among moss and ferns, and laughingly asked if she was comfortable, because he was going to keep her there a long time.

As she said, "Yes, quite comfortable," he threw himself down by her side. The first time he had talked to her in the woods came back to them both. Bessie was trembling from head to foot, and was almost unable to keep up a show of the composure she was so far from feeling. She first wished that he would not speak, and then that he would "say his say" at once, and have it over before she betrayed her nervousness. Their respective attitudes were reversed. Of old she had been self-contained and decided, he agitated and impulsive. Without noticing her agitation, which amounted to distress, he calmly lighted his cigar, and commenced asking her ordinary questions about herself, her life in New York, and so on. Then he began, abruptly,—

"Bessie, it seems strange for us to be off again in the wilderness together. One would not think

so many years had gone by. This looks like the same spot, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember the day I left Fort Derby?"

She kept her eyes turned away and her face calm as she endured her torture.

"Yes, I remember."

"Do you remember one day when I had come in from a hard ride with an important letter from General R—to your father, and fell asleep on the lounge in the general's office while waiting to deliver it to him,—at least you thought I was asleep, for you came in very softly and kissed me on the forehead? Do you not remember?"

"No, I do not."

"Well, I do. I lived on that one kiss, I cannot tell you how long. You never kissed me again till just before I left you on that winter morning,—I can see that same sunrise now. You thought I was asleep and would not know. I think if I had been dead I should have felt it. Bessie, please look at me. You need not turn your face away this time. This is what I have to say to you. From the moment I left you on that morn-

ing a change came over me. As you could not or would not love me, I determined that you should at least respect me, and perhaps some day be a little proud of me. I actually studied, and refrained from doing anything that I thought you would disapprove of. In fact, I made you a sort of conscience and tried to take my trial as a salutary discipline. Sometimes I am almost ready to say all was for the best. I can now see that perhaps there were reasons why we should have been unhappy together. That would have killed me. Now I have, at least, a romance, a happiness to look back upon that cannot be taken away from me. Come what may that much is mine forever, for eternity. I have only this to add, I feel towards you now as I have for years, as I have from the first moment I saw you. If I do not see you again for years to come, if never again, you are to think of me as always the same."

As if fearing to lose his self-control he suddenly broke off. After a little he began,—

"What did you do for the first months East? Your going away was so horridly lonesome and desolate, my heart ached for you."

"Oh, I cried my foolish self to sleep for three

months every night after you left me, and wanted to cry all day too."

"Then, Bessie, you must have loved me a little?"

She was astonished that she could say calmly,—

"Yes, a little, and I wondered you never knew. I could not tell you. It would have made it harder for us both."

"Bessie, it is only lately that I have suspected that once you must have cared a little for me. I was too tyrannical, too childish, too exacting. If I had been better and had had patience it might have come out all right. Bessie, it is a terrible thing for a man to feel that he himself has thrown away his own life! Did you find the little cross I left for you? I slipped up to your room like a thief in the night, and was almost frightened to death at old Lucy's footsteps in the next room."

She made no answer, but loosened the scarlet handkerchief, and there hung the cross on her neck.

He threw one arm over her lap, and looked in her face.

"Bessie, my sweetheart, will you give me one kiss to live on for years, forever, darling?"

The temptation to tell him of her lonesome, disappointed life almost overcame her. She seemed to be standing outside of herself, and reviewing her own actions and struggles passionlessly, as if they were being performed by another. She saw love and sympathy, her happiest recollections, and her one romance there at her feet, within too easy reach. She could almost hear Waring's heart beat as he held her hand and looked for her answer. On the other side she saw the cold, hard, unattractive path of duty and honor. Honor! so cold and colorless when love and inclination are set over against it! But, with that clearness of vision only vouchsafed to the pure in heart, she saw the situation in all its fearfulness, and with a mental prayer for herself, for him, and for Lennox, who unwittingly had left her for years to these temptations, she looked Waring courageously in the face and said,—

“Charlie, you know I cannot.”

He hesitated a moment, drew himself away from her, and said, very gently,—

“I beg your pardon, I shouldn't have asked you. I'll never annoy you again, never,—but you must not forget me.”

He rose from the ground, told Bessie to stay there till he returned, and, walking down the margin of the river, cut a stick from a tree, sharpened the end, and picking up a good-sized stone, he came back to her. He had assumed his old jaunty air and had bade adieu to the tragics. Bessie felt relieved, and asked what he was going to do.

"You shall soon see. Are you seated comfortably?"

"Yes, I am."

"Last night I could not rest, thinking of this interview. I am going to take a nap, and I am afraid you will run away from me—so." And he coolly ran his picket through Bessie's dress and hammered it down with the stone. After arranging his coat for a pillow, and intimating that there were "some girls who never would help a man to be comfortable," he put his curly head on his arm and settled himself for a nap, or at least a pretended one.

The light breeze stirred the trees just enough to vary the flickering lights and shadows thrown on the rocks in the stream. The water flowed gently by with hardly a murmur, and the quiet

surface was only occasionally troubled by the touch of the golden wing of the dragon-fly, the splash of the ubiquitous kingfisher, or the rise of a small trout, his glistening body thrown full length above the water in his endeavor to reach some adventurous bright-winged inhabitant of the summer air. The crickets, the bees, and their many neighbors made the air sleepy with their buzzing and chirruping. The whole scene was soothing and restful. Soon Waring was really asleep, with his lady-love most unromantically but safely picketed by his side.

As she sat there by him she thought how much of the boy still remained, how his mother must love him, how she might if she dared. His curls were bright as ever, and the graceful form was perfect, but the forehead was not as smooth as when he first poured out his griefs to her in that other wilderness. The long eyelashes gave a pathetic shade to his face, and there was the indescribable and indefinable trace of struggles and years not perceptible, in the still boyish face, when animated.

He sighed once in his childlike slumbers, and Bessie spoke half aloud,—

“Must we all suffer, even in our sleep?”

She could watch over him for a short time before taking up her every-day life. No one was near to criticise or comment upon her behavior. He himself could not know the delight it was to her just to sit there near him and have him once more all to herself. As she sat there sentinel over his slumbers, in spite of her sad thoughts she was amused at the many denizens of moss and fern, of earth and air, that flew and crawled about him, and warded off these many-winged and multiple-legged visitors. Once a yellow butterfly fluttered over his head, evidently with the intention of lighting on his hair, but after poising over him flew away. Bessie looked after it with a sort of superstition, wondering vaguely, Is it in a form like this that our thoughts leave us and wander about when we sleep? Would he really know if he were dead and I kissed him? Suppose he were dead,—or dead to me. And her thoughts wandered off into those fantastic regions where the real and the unreal are so curiously mingled.

When she aroused from her revery Waring was awake and looking at her. He said nothing about their late conversation, and after lazily gazing about

him, proposed a little walk along the rather rough margin of the stream.

As they went along he picked a bunch of delicate little blue-bells and handed them to her.

"Here are some blue-bells for your belt, in place of the violets we used to have. Do you ever wear violets now? I often think of you at your operas and balls with violets in your dress, and wonder if they look as pretty as when tucked in the old blue riding-skirt, or on the pretty white dresses at our garrison parties."

"You need never think of them again in that connection. I have never worn violets since the last you gave me;" and, lowering her voice, "I have them yet, poor little withered, faded things. Now, Charlie, the shadows are getting deeper, and you know the fate prophesied to the belated traveller, so we must pack up and away."

The canoe was carried to the water, packed, and was soon gliding down-stream. After a time the other canoes were sighted, and the day for Waring was ended. By the time the larger boats came to view he had quite resumed his devil-may-care manner. The young ladies in their different boats each held up for inspection two mi-

nute trout. Soon the little fleet collected and all arrived together at the yacht, where the numerous adventures of the day were, at least in part, related. Miss Huston had tired of grasshoppers for bait, and had actually caught a trout with a huckleberry,—“a *bête noire*” Tom called it.

Mrs. Henderson had lifted a victim into the boat, and it had wriggled off the hook into the drapery of her overdress. It continued to wriggle and she continued to jump until the whole boat-load were in imminent danger of capsizing.

Waring and Mrs. Lennox had as many fish as all the rest of the party combined. Tom asked how on earth, or on water, they got so many. Our deceitful lieutenant told him with a reproving air that was almost too much for Bessie's gravity, that the reason *he* caught so few was because he spent too much time and thought over his young lady, and not enough on the fish. Tom at this could not resist giving him a knowing look, as much as to say that the expedition had been successful even if the fish were still in the clear waters of the “Raspberry.”

The trout were sent to the galley, the company arranged their toilets, and were soon assembled

around the cabin table. When they returned from their different expeditions the little dining-room was now quite like home, and all were a little sad to think that on the morrow they were to turn their faces eastward.

The next morning they left the beautiful islands, and that evening, as they were grouped on deck, they were treated to a grand display of the aurora. The first quivering dart of light was seen simultaneously by half the party. This one ray alone darted up to the zenith, but in a few seconds half the heavens were glowing with shifting, quivering spears of light. They turned from white to blue, from green to red, and almost covered the sky with their ever-changing colors. They were so beautiful, so majestic, here far from the habitations of men, where the silence was only broken by the measured pulse of the little engine, that Bessie almost expected to hear the music of the spheres break forth from these pinnacles of light, that rose in the air like the pipes of a great celestial organ, where the harmonies of heaven might be for once attuned to mortal ears. It seemed a sort of vision glorious vouchsafed to her to make her yoke more easy and her burden more light.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE cruise homeward proceeded with as much gayety as the outward voyage. Some joke had been perpetrated upon all but Mrs. Worthington. There was some allusion that would quiet the chaff of every other person, but so far she had proved invulnerable. Finally her turn came. One night she retired to the cabin leaving the others on deck. She was to call them in a few moments, as they were to be wakened at five the next morning to go ashore. Not hearing the promised voice of admonition and warning, they forgot all about it. Suddenly it came over them that it was hours since Mrs. Worthington had gone below. The ladies rapidly and quietly gathered together their wraps, and descended the narrow companion-way. It was evident that Mrs. Worthington had forgotten them, but why? The mystery was explained as soon as they reached the cabin. Her stateroom door was open and curtains undrawn. She had fallen asleep saying her prayers! She was kneeling on the floor, her arms on her bunk, her

head on her hands, fast asleep. Her beautiful iron-gray hair was done in a loose knot on the top of her head, and her dark crimson wrapper enveloped her in its soft folds. The dim light of a ship's lantern shone directly over her head, and altogether she made a graceful picture.

The gentlemen, hearing sounds of suppressed mirth from below, with a curiosity ill becoming the sterner sex, could not resist investigating matters, and soon they too were regarding the sleeping matron with mingled admiration and amusement. Waring said he would awake her. He wanted revenge for his broken rest in that ambulance years ago. He laid his hand on her shoulder and gently roused her, telling her as it was two o'clock in the morning, they had called merely to suggest that it was bedtime.

The doctor had had his misadventure at Copper Harbor. They left that place one evening after dark. The night was unusually black. As they were waiting for the boat a man, evidently a miner, walked up to him and, holding a piece of something in his hand, requested the doctor to buy a specimen of copper, a remarkably fine and pure one. The doctor demurred on account of the

darkness, but, upon repeated assurances that it was pure copper, finally yielded, and purchased the specimen. When they reached the yacht and compared notes and purchases, the doctor's was found to be copper sure enough,—he had paid a good price for a piece of an ancient copper kettle!

At the Sault, Waring left them, not waiting to see the "Mist" pass through the canal. He had told Bessie good-by the night before as they promenaded the deck for the last time. Now he only shook hands with her as he did with the rest.

Once more their lives diverged. He went off to his duties, leaving her much as he did that other time, but somehow much of the rebelliousness and bitterness were gone.

He had learned far better than she, and was so far her superior, that awful lesson of life that in some way or other here below we must suffer, and happy is the man or woman who suffers for the right and true, yes, even for the inevitable, instead of the consequences of his own folly or wickedness.

They were soon to arrive at Detroit, and the ladies were busy packing and arranging what the gentlemen termed "the general plunder," collected

during the past week. Miss Huston found that a "moccock" of fine maple-sugar had burst open and sifted through her other possessions. Tom said, "'Tis sweet to be remembered."

Bessie was to leave on the night train. After Waring left she realized how strong the desire was to get back to her children and to Lennox. Yes, she really would be glad to see him again, though she expected the same tiresome life. But she did want to see her home. She found a couple of letters from Lennox about every-day matters. They were written on business paper, evidently at his business desk. "Business" always! She wondered if he had taken time from his business to read the long enthusiastic letters she had written. She feared he had not. Her little boy's letter gave her unalloyed pleasure. There was no sense of duty about that as he announced an epoch in his existence and "showed off" his newly acquired lore:

"Mama

i HAVE PANTS ON

FOX CAT COW

RAT OX

FRED."

Lennox had missed his wife during her absence, but realized sadly, not at all triumphantly, that he could exist very comfortably without her. His children were more his own than they had ever been, and the household, being for some years well managed, continued on to his satisfaction. His wife having failed him in so much, he had ceased to regard her as the source of even his most trivial and ordinary comforts.

Bessie arrived at their temporary home, and Lennox was really glad to see her, and the children were overjoyed, particularly when the various little presents were brought to view. Bessie was happier than she had been for a long time. She had seen Waring and had had a taste of the old life, but she could speak his name without a blush, and look the world still in the face, even if rebelliously and defiantly.

In the early autumn they found themselves again in town, and going through the old rounds. The impulse given Bessie's mental and physical energies by her taste of out-door life carried her on hopefully for some months, but before spring the old depression had come over her, and she realized that she was not so young as she once

was. There was no breaking up, she was far too young for that, but it was getting harder to fight, harder to seem what she was not. Sometimes she would think of telling Lennox the state of affairs, from her stand-point, and risk everything, rather than lead a life that she despised for its deception. It was true that Lennox had been undemonstrative to coldness, but that she saw was his natural disposition. She had at first assumed an indifference that was not natural to her, and now she and her husband were both suffering in consequence. Then good resolutions were stilled by the idea that she would never be forgiven. And, besides that, if she could be content with a home, clothes, and servants, why should she risk losing these by enlightening him upon his own and her shortcomings?

So, with that mania for martyrdom, real or imagined, that seems occasionally to possess women who are spared all real afflictions, and are otherwise strong in character and clear in mind, she chose to attribute her unhappiness to the hardness of fate rather than to her own perverted ideas of what her husband and the general fitness of things should be.

Upon these occasions she would begin her tramping up and down, what Waring used to call "her caged tiger exercise," and gather together a cheerful and proper countenance before the arrival of her husband at dinner-time.

Her expression had changed a great deal during the past two years. In conversation her face was bright and animated as that of a girl of sixteen, but in repose there were sad, but at the same time rather hard lines about her mouth, and the large gray eyes were undeniably pathetic. The impression given was of slight weariness. One youthful and unknown admirer had written to her as "sweet one with the saddened eyes." She, properly but cruelly, handed the effusion over to Lennox and Huntington for their inspection. The verses were really very pretty, but met with scathing criticism from these two superior beings. In fact, men were always interested in Mrs. Lennox, and some said "her gentle, tired expression was so beautiful it suggested some hidden sorrow," etc.

Women said, "What stuff and nonsense! it's being up all night and on the go all day. They say she never had an ache or pain in her life, and that she does more in a day than most of us do in

three. She is with her children a great deal, entertains a great deal, goes to church a great deal, does a great deal of everything, in fact lives an awfully fast life; that is, her pace is too fast, not wild. Some day she will go to pieces suddenly,—she won't keep it up forever,—and then you men won't think so much of her sentimental eyes."

About a year from this time the daily papers contained an item one day scarce glanced at by the large majority of readers. It said that the Indians were once more rising on the frontier. It was the old story of lying whites and blood-thirsty savages.

Waring, Arthur, and Carsten were once more together in the West.

Bessie read every word about these troubles that to her were so horribly real, but never spoke of them.

One morning at breakfast, as Lennox glanced over his paper, he said,—

"Why, Bessie, our old friend, Mr. Arthur, is on frontier duty again, I see."

"Yes, poor fellow," was her only comment, and she almost choked as she said that much.

There was nothing satisfactory to be gained by the papers. She read them morning and evening. She bought extras, and was distracted with fear for Arthur and her old friends as well as for Waring. The days dragged on as she read these unsatisfactory accounts, while she went about as usual with the regular routine of life. She had become so nervous that the least sound made her start, and so preoccupied that she answered questions at random.

An opera-party had been arranged for the following evening. Bessie had accepted days before, and now had no excuse to offer. One thing comforted her, she would not be expected to talk or entertain any one. Her hostess on this occasion was a lady of fashion, whose whole existence was arranged as much as possible for "effect." She came over in the morning to see Mrs. Lennox in regard to her costume. She was to do her the favor not to wear pale blue, that was to be the privilege of her sister, a *débutante*.

These trifles acted on Bessie's troubled mind as the hair-cloth girdles of old did on the bodies of the saints.

"How," she thought, "can people be so earnest

over such small matters when women are being murdered and men shot in their own country?"

After the details of the toilette were arranged the votary of effectiveness rose to depart. Then it fortunately came over Bessie that she had not heard a word of the numerous directions.

"Oh, forgive me, my head aches a little; what did you say for me to wear?"

"I said your ivory satin with the Spanish lace. It is Rose's coming out. I want it to be the handsomest opera-party this season. I'll send your bouquet,—pink roses. We will meet in the lobby. We'll go to the Brunswick afterwards for supper. Wear your dark blue velvet cloak with the ermine lining. It will be so effective thrown over the back of your chair. It will set off your white dress—I shall not say anything about yourself—to such advantage. I hope you have heard me this time; do not disappoint me on any account."

As the voluble visitor withdrew Bessie smiled as she thought, "Yes, that woman invited Fred and me to her opera-party just as she fills her house with rugs and bric-à-brac! There is a particular nook in which we are 'effective.' Now for

the papers. 'By telegraph. A special to the *New York Herald*, dated yesterday, says that a detachment of the —th, under Captain Carsten, is scouring the San Filippo Mountains in hot pursuit of the Indians, and not more than eight or ten hours behind. A fight is expected to-morrow.'

With this news in her mind she went, with a heavy heart, into her own apartment to arrange to her friend's satisfaction that toilette of satin and lace. She had not been long at this occupation when her maid arrived with a message.

"Mr. Fielding, ma'am, wants to see you very particularly, and begs pardon for coming so early."

"Yes, Elsie, I will go right down. Get everything ready for me to-night, I'm not well."

Bessie found Fielding with such a glorified expression of countenance she perceived that something unusual had occurred. He had come to announce his engagement to Miss Howard,—that same Miss Howard who had more than once laughed at him for his admiration for Mrs. Lennox,—and, to celebrate this event, he was going to break over his strict rules and go to the opera that evening with the party.

"You know a man must do something out of

the ordinary when he is engaged, particularly after trying so long."

His happiness had made him daring. Bessie endeavored to express herself in proper terms, but Fielding saw that she was preoccupied and nervous. At that moment a newsboy's screech was heard, and she rose suddenly to her feet, flew to the front door, and called after the boy. Fielding stood astonished between the windows, and was still gazing blankly at the wavy *portière* when Bessie returned with her "extra."

She would have procured it in the face of a whole general convention as soon as in the presence of this one quiet young priest.

"Mr. Fielding, do you remember Mr. Arthur? He and some of our friends are fighting the Indians, and I want all, all the news I can get. Here it is: 'The fight between our forces and the Indians took place in the San Filippo Cañon as expected. Two officers and ten men are reported killed. Troops and scouts are following the Indians.'

"Think of it, Mr. Fielding! Isn't it horrible? My friends may be dead, and to-night I am going to the opera. Isn't it dreadful to be a woman?"

Now go away, leave me; to-night we will know the worst."

He hesitated a moment and left her. She seated herself on the sofa with her hands over her eyes and thought, "No, not the worst; I cannot bear that!"

She felt it necessary to keep up till the evening paper arrived, otherwise she would have confessed herself ill, as she really was. If she should have no further news she would ask Lennox to go himself to headquarters and find out what he could for her.

In the afternoon there were no extras. In the evening paper there was no news, but quite late a note arrived from Lennox. He would not be home for dinner, as an important business engagement had been made for him. His dress suit was to be sent to his office, and he would, in all probability, meet the opera-party at the time appointed.

After the long day evening came, and there was nothing new. It flashed through Bessie's mind that there was one more chance. As her husband would not be there to go to the telegraph-office, she would go herself. As she hastily began dress-

ing she told Elsie to "send word to Joseph that I want the coupé in half an hour." The maid looked astonished and descended with the order. She returned and assisted her mistress with the beautiful creamy toilette. She selected a handsome pendant, always worn with the costume, but Bessie pushed it aside for the little cross that she never allowed any one to touch. Elsie had never seen her mistress "that obstinate," and wondered at her appearing with such an insignificant ornament and in such a bad humor.

"Mrs. Lennox, you are that sick you are trembling all over."

"Elsie, if you don't hush you will drive me mad. Keep quiet, get my blue wrap, and see if the coupé has come."

The coupé had come, and Elsie, putting on a bravery she did not feel, walked into her mistress's room with a glass of sherry.

"Mrs. Lennox, if you don't drink this glass of wine I'll be that nervous about you I'll not sleep a wink."

Bessie thanked her and drank the wine, and the maid brought out overshoes and wraps. Bessie looked at her watch. The time was passing.

"No, Elsie, I haven't time ; just give me something to put over my head."

A piece of lace like the dress trimming was the first thing convenient, and Bessie flung it over her head.

"Now, Elsie, take my fan, and I will follow you in a moment."

The children, who generally watched the robing of "my pretty mamma," had been banished this evening. Bessie kissed them good-night, and, gathering up her flowing skirts, descended the stairs.

"Give me my gloves and fan, Elsie. Don't come out with me, it's too cold."

The cold was indeed intense. The ground was hardly covered with snow, but what there was crunched under foot with that cruel gritting sound that announces the mercury at the zero point.

Bessie had never before given an order to a servant that implied an understanding between them and her. To-night she felt humiliated, as she said, as coolly as she could,—

"Joseph, drive me directly to the —th Street *Herald* office. I will stop there a moment, and then to the Academy. Get me there before eight

o'clock, and, Joseph, keep quiet about it. Do you understand?"

Joseph almost dropped the reins in his astonishment at the turn of affairs, as he answered, "Yes, madam, I do." And as fast as was safe to escape police regulations and collisions the little coupé dashed down-town, and stopped in front of the bulletin-board of a "branch office."

The gas shone directly on the blackboard, and, in spite of the severe cold, more than the usual number of men were collected about it.

Only desperation can make a refined woman do anything vulgarly conspicuous. She sat there in her coupé irresolute. Through the perfect plate glass the employés on the first floor were plainly visible. Now that she was there she had no idea where to go or whom to ask for information, but something she must do. She flung her train over her arm, the lace had fallen from her head, and with slippered feet she stepped to the pavement. A few hard white snowflakes were in her hair. Her face was white even to her lips, while a red spot glowed on each cheek. As she stood on the pavement, confused by the peculiarity of her situation and the brilliancy of the gaslight, a telegraph clerk

came from the office. He held his overcoat together at the collar with his left hand as with the chalk in his right he wrote the latest news. After one or two lines, he wrote down,—

“The names of the two officers killed in the San Filippo Cañon were Captain William Carsten and Lieutenant Charles Waring!”

Bessie stood perfectly still. Her hands had dropped to her sides. The velvet cloak had slipped from her shoulders, and fur, lace, and velvet lay in a mass on the ground. She mechanically entered her carriage, and was rapidly driven off before the bystanders had recovered from their amazement.

As she stepped from her carriage at the opera-house she was not so absorbed in herself but that she saw the forlorn old man who held open the carriage-door for her, the poor little newsboy, blowing his fingers and shivering under his scant garments, and the little Italian, almost a baby, crying out the librettos, and suddenly she felt overwhelmed with the sorrow of the whole world. Her past selfish indifference to all troubles but her own made her ashamed. She did another unheard-of thing: she asked her coachman to lend her

some change. She gave some to each of the suppliants, from an old hag she bought a bunch of half-frozen roses, which she gave to the baby with the librettos, and then entered the brilliantly-lighted house.

If the rich often forget and are cruelly indifferent to the physical woes of the poor, the poor often forget that velvet and lace and a smiling face cover many a breaking heart. When the rich learn to understand the outward and visible suffering of the poor, and the poor learn the fact that all, even the rich, have their own particular burden to bear, the great reconciliation of the conflicting classes will be accomplished, and until each side is thus enlightened it will not be.

She joined the party just in time to prevent her hostess from getting into a state of excitement. She had recovered from the first shock of the news, and was in that stunned condition of being when one is only conscious of a dull, all-pervading ache of soul and body.

Lennox was only a moment behind her, and after asking her about the children he dropped back to the lady that had been assigned to his care for the evening.

Upon entering the box Bessie raised her eyebrows at Fielding, and he, taking the hint, came to her.

"Mr. Fielding, as you are engaged, all women are alike to you save one. Now if you stay with me this evening I will be grateful to you always. I am too much distressed to talk to a stranger."

"I will be most happy to do anything I can for you. Have you seen the names in the newspaper?"

There was no way of avoiding the question if she had wished to.

"Yes; they are Captain Carsten and Lieutenant Waring, two of my father's officers, one of them an old and dear friend."

Fielding, seeing her agitation was very great, dropped the dangerous subject.

They began to arrange themselves for the entertainment. Fielding placed himself nearest the stage, and with gentle consideration seated Bessie next, so that either looking at the opera or talking to him her back would be partially turned to the box-party. It was to be a great musical event. The large building was a beautiful sight, filled with

handsomely-dressed women, lights, and flowers. A sweet German prima donna and a rare Italian tenor were to take the leading parts.

Bessie heard the singing as if in a dream. She was nervously handling the beautiful pink roses that were a part of the effective management of the party-giver, lost in thought and yet trying to keep from thinking. When Linda entered with the flowers that Carlo had left her, Bessie leaned over to at least appear interested. Whether she had forgotten or had never known the opera, when the sweet Linda stepped to the front of the stage and began with her clear, tender tones,—

“Oh, star that guidest my fervent love, thou art life and light to me,”

she was almost petrified. It was like a voice coming to her from the dead. The familiar air in that crowded, gay assembly where all were supposed to be happy and amused came like a message from another world. After the first shock it quieted and calmed her. At the end she carelessly tossed the roses to the diva, who received them gracefully.

Mrs. Lennox's impulsive acknowledgment of her

powers started quite a furore, and to Bessie's unutterable happiness she responded to the bravas, and sung again, "*Oh luce de quest' anima.*"

Before the end of the opera a telegram was brought to Lennox. He was called to Boston as soon as possible on important business. He had a little conversation with his wife, left her some directions, and put her in Fielding's care. He would leave before the supper. She begged to leave with him; pleaded "feeling badly." She was ready to tell him much, perhaps all. With none of that instinctive appreciation so natural to men of more genial mould, he saw nothing unusual in his wife's manner or appearance, and said it would never do for them both to leave.

Bessie went with the rest to the supper. She got home in the wee small hours. The agony of that entertainment she never forgot, and from that time forward excused herself from late suppers. Her children were sleeping quietly, and she looked at her little daughter and wished her dead rather than fated to live a life like her own. Elsie was awakened and sent to her own room. Then Bessie stirred up her fire, locked herself in her room, and gave way to her grief. She was far past the

weeping stage. She remained unconsciously in full dress, only taking off her gloves.

All Waring's little notes she read and re-read. Then all the keepsakes that were perishable she threw into the flames. Nothing was left of him in this world but memories.

She sat rigid the night through, staring into the dying fire. The handsome cloak lay in a heap on the floor, and a lace flounce hung from her rumpled train. What did she see in that smouldering fire? The real picture,—a haggard, middle-aged man, soiled, unshaven, and begrimed, with an unsightly wound in his left side? No woman is fair-minded enough to see so clearly. She saw her old boy lover, still young, still beautiful, asleep on the grass in the woods, with the words "I love you" on his lips, and with that beautiful butterfly, for so many generations of men the emblem of the soul, hovering over him to receive his departing spirit.

How she wished that Lennox had brought her back, as she had asked him to! It was all over now, perhaps she could have told him. He would have understood and let her begin life anew.

When the city began to wake to life, Bessie, worn out, took a short rest. Elsie said, as her mistress appeared below,—

“Mrs. Lennox, you look as if you were going to die.”

“Well, Elsie, I am not going to die; I’ll probably live to be a hundred. Are there any letters?”

“Yes, there’s one.”

It was from Bessie’s old friend, the Bishop of Walla Ha. He was building a little church at a military fort, would she help him? Yes, of course she would, but put the matter aside for a time.

The paper gave no news further than she had learned the night before. But she saw that “Linda” was to be performed again that evening, and dressing herself very plainly, she started to the opera alone. She was half frightened at this piece of daring. She got her ticket to the family circle, and went up, up, up into the amphitheatre. It was a strange sensation to look down from that height on the boxes and circles, where she could recognize many acquaintances. It was like looking down on one’s own old world from another sphere. The people up here were so different

from those below. They were many of them more than respectably dressed, while some were shabby. Some were professionals, men and women, with the score before them. Some had evidently pinched and saved their pennies to indulge in this, to them, greatest of all pleasure. All about there was an air of intense and earnest enjoyment, never shown, probably never felt, by those who go to entertainments to be seen as much as to see and enjoy. A middle-aged man gave up his seat the entire evening to a lame old gentleman with a cane, and Bessie realized, what all of us do not, that the amenities of life extend upward, or perhaps downward, and even reach past the family circle to the amphitheatre; that the boxes do not monopolize the courtesies and kind feelings of life.

As she looked round the vast assembly from this position, a sight so new to her, she wondered if any one ever went to an opera before to hear a requiem sung in the notes of a love-song. Between the acts she heard two young girls comparing the present box-party with the corresponding one of the night previous, and telling of a beautiful young lady who started the applause by tossing down a

beautiful bouquet. Before the close, Bessie fearing recognition, started home. On the way she met Fielding. He was coming home late from some errand of mercy, and met her directly under a gaslight. She was hardly sorry to find him, but he said, reprovingly,—

“Mrs. Lennox, don’t you know it is dangerous and indecent for you to be out at such an hour, and alone?”

“Mr. Fielding, two of my old friends are killed. I am greatly distressed. I could not stay quietly at home. It is terrible to do nothing when one is miserable; one can stand the day, but the night,—and to be all alone! One of them——”

“Used to sing ‘*Oh luce di quest’ anima*,’ and gave you violets,—and you loved him?”

“Mr. Fielding,”—and she looked at him unflinchingly under the vestibule light of her own door-way,—“yes, I loved him; Charles Waring, United States Army! I found out when it was too late that I loved him. He is dead now, and I dare not even mourn for him. Do you understand?—dead?—to-night? One night I have worn black, to-morrow the gay clothes and the gay life again. Oh! I despise it all.”

"Oh, Mrs. Lennox, and your husband, do you not love him?"

"I did once, very truly, but he don't care for my love, or any one's. I do yet a little, but I think it will not be for long. He would not take me home last night when I begged him to. He never feels. He only sees and reasons."

"Mrs. Lennox, this to me is most horrible."

"It should not be. You know that 'most of us who have reached thirty have our Pompeii'; I have not reached thirty. Perhaps my ashes are no blacker or deeper than yours will be."

"Mrs. Lennox, may I meet your quotation with a better one? 'Always there is a black spot in our sunshine; it is even the shadow of ourselves.' I beg as a friend, as a priest of God, that you will not obstinately overshadow your own life. Good-night, good-night!"

As he turned to make his adieux he noticed, for the first time, a few white threads in Bessie's brown locks. The sorrow of the past few days showed in her white face, and the thought saddened him, as it flashed, for the first time, into his mind that this beautiful woman was becoming old, hard, and disappointed.

About a month after this Bessie saw by the paper that "First Lieutenant Arthur, First Cavalry, had been ordered to report in person to the superintendent of the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, for duty as adjutant of the Academy, *vice* First Lieutenant M. D. Brown, Artillery, to be relieved."

About the time he reported, she received a small express package directed in his well-known hand. With trembling fingers she cut the string, and there, without comment or word, lay her mother's old Prayer Book and her little pin. Arthur had not dared write about the brave death of his old comrade, that was public property. His few effects were gathered together to send to his childless mother in the East. These two he sent where he thought they belonged.

Bessie had grown more gentle and patient. Perhaps her trouble was beginning to soften her. Perhaps, as she grew older, she longed still more for the companionship that always seemed within reach and yet impossible to have.

Soon after the arrival of the last mementos of her lover, she thought with compunction how long the good bishop's letter had remained unan-

swered. After dinner one night she said to her husband,—

“Fred, here is a letter from the bishop of Walla Ha. I would like to send him something for his little church.”

“Well, what shall it be?”

“I would like a chalice and paten, if it is not too much.”

“Certainly not. You had better get it immediately. I see the letter is over a month old; you have been rather careless about it.”

“Will you come with me to get it?”

“No, that’s rather out of my line. You get it at Tiffany’s; I’ll pay the bill, that will be my share.”

A few days after, the cup and paten were ordered. Under a little gold crown in the chalice, sunk into the silver, was the little gold cross and diamond star, and underneath the paten, out of sight, was the bayonet and little heart. “In memoriam C. W.” was all the inscription.

The gift was sent off with its accompanying check, and her dear old friend wrote his thanks and his blessing to “his daughter.” “The gift was like her own self, good, substantial, sweet, and altogether charming.”

As that little communion set, at St. Paul's in the mountains, was shown to tourists in a far-away corner of our country, many were the various surmises and romances imagined by those who beheld the little chalice. The cross was easily accounted for, but the pin? Well, it was generally concluded that "C. W." was a soldier who carried a musket with a bayonet on it.

In the fall Bessie had a note from an acquaintance. An aunt of hers was to spend the winter with her. She knew of Mrs. Lennox and General Lansing very well. In fact, her son, Lieutenant Waring, had been in the general's company. Would Mrs. Lennox please come and see her? It would be a great favor, etc. "Mrs. Waring being in deep mourning is always at home in the evening."

Bessie wondered if her self-possession was always to be thus tried. There was nothing to do but consent, so one evening when she and Lennox were going out together she told him she must make a call, and would send the coupé back for him; that half an hour was all the time she wanted. She did not quite like the idea of calling in dinner dress, but she was requested to come in the even-

ing, and as evenings were few and short, and engagements many and long, she started to do her duty. She found her friend and Mrs. Waring at home. The latter was a slight, delicate woman, who, though not old, had very white hair. Her features were regular and had that unmistakable look of sorrow, that gentle, "made perfect through suffering" expression, so different from the agonized faces of the women who have been made old and wrinkled through disgrace and shame, heaped upon them by the men and women who should have been their protectors and comforters. As she rose to welcome the younger woman and smiled pleasantly, the resemblance to her son was striking. The son being so much the image of the mother almost always implies either that the woman's face is too masculine for womanly beauty, or that the son seems effeminate. Waring's thin and generally closed lips alone had saved him from this imputation.

As Lennox called for Bessie after her formal call, and she rose to adjust her wrap, Mrs. Waring kindly urged her to come again. She "had many old friends that Mrs. Lennox could tell her about. It would be quite a treat," etc.

Bessie's visits became frequent. She enjoyed this lady's companionship. Of intimate friends she had almost none. To her the great, important organization of the country was the United States Army. The women she met in every-day life had not the slightest interest in military affairs, and among them she felt herself an outsider, and had a silent though unspoken contempt for a "woman who didn't know an ambulance from an artillery-wagon."

Mrs. Waring had consented to lunch with Bessie on several occasions when they were alone, and the friendship progressed finely. They talked over old friends, and Bessie told her much of her son and their life at Fort Derby. One day after Bessie had been telling her some story, in which Arthur and Waring figured conspicuously, she said,—

"Oh, Mrs. Waring, you must get awfully tired of hearing me chatter, but you know it is only once in years that I have a chance to talk to any one that will listen to me. You know I haven't—I was going to say ever had—any mother; from almost the first that I can remember she was so anxious about father that I never dared say army

to her for fear she would cry, so I hope you will forgive me."

Mrs. Waring affectionately replied, "My child, I can never tire hearing one talk who has loved my son."

She did not mean anything more than "my son's friend," but Bessie started, and, looking at her, burst into tears.

"Yes, and you too, then, have discovered that I loved your son? Why is it that my one crime must be always brought before me? Perhaps you wonder why I didn't marry him? Forgive me when I tell you I had some nonsensical idea that because he did not reach to my father's high standard in matters of religion and duty, that he was only a boy, and little better than a heathen, that in consequence of this I would not be happy with him. So I thought I had forgotten him. Then when it was too late I found he was not forgotten. Then there was no consolation to be found in religion, or duty, or common sense, or anything I had sacrificed him to. I tell you," and she rose vehemently to her feet, "I have nothing left,—nothing!"

The elderly lady tried to calm her, softly saying,

"My child, do you think you are the only one who suffers? My husband, my daughter, my son, are taken from me. Is that nothing?"

Bessie confronted her with some of the savageness of her girlhood days.

"Suffering? You don't know what it is! I suppose when you received that horrible telegram that you spent the night on your knees in tears and in prayer. Do you think I ever have a chance for tears? When you were on your knees I was at the opera and at a grand supper afterwards. I could not even confess to my small world that a friend was gone. I am so unfortunately strong that I have to march right along. No one thinks of helping me no matter how much I need it. Then, is it nothing to live a lie? If I dared, I would tell my husband that as he cares so little for me I have ceased to care for him. I do not think he would refuse me shelter and clothes. It's all I have now. No doubt it is more than I deserve. It was not so at the beginning. I loved him as long as he would let me. Then I looked backward. I do not hope ever to look forward again."

What mother could fail to shudder at sight of

this devastation wrought, however innocently, by her own son?

She seated herself by this woman to whom, from the first, she had felt drawn.

"You say you have nothing to look forward to; you have much. You say your suffering has done nothing for you? Much of it, I am afraid, has been through your own fault or foolish imaginings,—so perhaps it has not. You know as we grow older, we elderly people, we grow physically far-sighted. I think we grow mentally and perhaps spiritually far-sighted also. We forget to notice the trivialities of life, and are only conscious of the grand *ensemble*. I cannot describe one of your toilettes, but I know you, your thoughts. Is it nothing that you have been an inspiration to my poor boy to live purely and die bravely? Have you not a son? Can you imagine a woman's life a failure who had accomplished that much for him? There are so few of us who accomplish anything, even the every-day duties lying at hand, that you should be thankful for having one piece of finished work to look back upon, and look forward with hope to accomplishing more. If your husband does not care for you, is it all his fault? Do you

ever try to make him? Does your pride never stand in the way? Some day tell him the truth. If he has neglected you, tell him so, quietly as a wife should, not like an avenging spirit. Have you not learned that men cannot be ordered to love their wives at the point of the bayonet? Before I leave you, will you promise me that you will begin immediately to try to live differently, and when a convenient time presents itself to tell your husband the truth? I know you both well enough to know that you will be much happier."

"I certainly can be no more miserable."

"Then you will promise me?"

After some hesitation she said, slowly,—

"Yes, I promise you."

It is wonderfully encouraging when one really makes up his or her mind to do the "square thing" that the way often opens, quite unexpectedly, to its accomplishment.

From the time of the above conversation Bessie had tried to be more gentle, and demand a little more of her husband's time and attention, and indeed was succeeding in her honest endeavor towards keeping her promise. To be even gently blamed by the mother of the man she had loved

so much, so long, had thrown a new and a not altogether pleasant light on the whole affair.

One Sunday afternoon as she returned alone from Fielding's little chapel she heard voices in their parlor; some one was talking with Lennox. It was not unprecedented for him to be chased and captured in his own house out of business hours by anxious clients, so Bessie, not recognizing the voices, passed the door without entering. Lennox called her to come in, and as she entered, found a lady and gentleman, the lady conversing volubly with her husband.

She was some years older than Bessie, fair, and had those irregular features and high cheek-bones so distressing when seen in blond women, where we want all lines to accord with the fair complexion.

She was expensively dressed in one of those execrable costumes where the costliness of the material is only less conspicuous than the illness of the fit. The husband sat a little outside the group, with that manner distressing and usual in men whose wives are trying to push them upwards into a social sphere unsuited to their tastes and aspirations.

Bessie naturally turned to the distressed, and soon put him at his ease with her pleasant manner and easy chat. Lennox had noticed the contrast between these two women. One was so much dressed, so embarrassingly effusive in manner, and the other so gracious, so pleasant, and dressed so—he did not know how to express it, but he could think it—so neat, so trim, so graceful, yet almost military in its severity. He was struck with the absence of what he called “tag ends.”

The couple soon left, and Bessie never thought of them again. They were old acquaintances of Lennox; she was polite, there was the end. After they left Lennox said,—

“Bessie, that is such a pretty dress, I do like it so much.”

“Well,” she laughed, “I am glad of it; but your compliments are rather late, this is the second season.”

“It’s strange I never noticed it before; the jacket, or coat, or whatever you women call it, fits you beautifully.”

“Yes, thanks to your tailor! You don’t know the blandishments I had to use on that hard-hearted man. I implored his up-town cutter and

his down-town foreman. I think only the fear of your displeasure, if he refused, induced him to honor me with a place among his customers,—or his patients,—but I succeeded in my vain endeavor."

At lunch and through dinner Lennox had an unusually preoccupied manner, and looked fairly ill. Bessie questioned him, but with no satisfactory result. After dinner, when they were quite alone, she turned in her usual walk and, seeing his pale face, said,—

"Fred, for Heaven's sake what is the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Come here, Bessie."

And, to her utter astonishment, he drew her to his knee.

"I have seen a ghost to-day."

Bessie was alarmed to hear this matter-of-fact man talk about ghosts. It suggested visions of an overwrought brain.

"I want to tell you about it. A great many years ago,—I was going to say before you were born,—from the time I was a child I was in love, as children are, with a little light-haired girl. It went on till we were quite grown. I went to the

army, and she left Connecticut with her family. The whole thing died a natural death. Well,—I am going to tell you the whole truth,—after our marriage, when I found you were unhappy and I disappointed, I once more thought of this girl. I do not mean I loved her, but way down in my heart I had a sort of fair-haired Idol. Have you ever noticed how a flash of lightning, on a dark night, will illuminate all things, small and great, how for the moment all the world stands still? How the railroad train ceases to move, the spokes of wheels are stationary, the branches of the trees are motionless? I feel as if a flash of lightning had illuminated my past life, and the vision has overwhelmed me. That homely, unrefined, raw-boned woman” (Bessie did not like to hear any woman, even a rival, “called names”) “we saw to-day was that girl. I cannot understand my boyish infatuation. I want to beg your pardon. I want you to let me try once more to begin again. I am mortified at the dulness of my perceptions. Because you were not educated in the same way, and in the same surroundings as the women who were my companions in my youth, I have thought you cold and heartless, and caring

only for what I gave you, and not for me. I am afraid that when I married a princess to help rule my little kingdom I was base enough to regret that I had not married a slave, or a child, to be ruled. Can you forgive me?"

Bessie had arisen from his knee and stood before her husband, her hands nervously clutching and twisting her handkerchief.

"I can forgive you easily, easily. All that is nothing. I have a confession to make that no man can forgive. You will, perhaps, never speak to me or let me touch the children when you hear it. Long, long ago in my father's regiment there was a young officer." She spoke distinctly, but breathed hard and quickly. "He loved me. I refused him. He loved me always. I met him but once since I was married. It was accidental. I was very unhappy, but—but—I did not allow him to make love to me. He was very honorable, he would not have done so anyway. As you became more and more indifferent I thought more of him. I endured it until two people discovered my secret."

"Two people, Bessie!" he said, astonished.

"Fred, don't be angry at him, for he is dead,

Fred, dead, in the San Filippo Cañon fight a year ago,—dead, with an arrow in his heart. The news came the night of that great opera party, when you were called off to Boston; don't you remember? I begged you to take me home with you before the supper. I would have told you everything that night if you had taken me home, but you would not. I read the news, on the bulletin-board at the *Herald* office, that night myself, and at the opera Mr. Fielding saw me trying to keep back the tears, and, connecting one thing with another, he knew all."

"How could Fielding see and know what I could not?"

"Because he was with me more, and cared if I felt distressed."

"Bessie, that is a hard speech."

She continued more quietly,—

"I do not want to be hard on any one but myself. I could endure my secret alone, but to think that he or any one should share it with me from you was too mortifying. That thought has driven me almost to desperation. I wanted to tell you and be honest, even if you despised me. Then another found it out."

"Another?"

"Yes, the boy's mother, Mrs. Waring. In an unguarded moment I told her that I had loved her son, that I had loved you, and would have continued to love you if you had not so clearly shown me your disappointment, and that now I had nothing to live for, that you were too honorable and strict ever to forgive me."

"What did she say at that?"

"She said I was to tell you everything,—that it would be better, even if things were not made up in a minute, to have an understanding and begin life all over again, and honestly,—but I was afraid." And she threw herself on the floor with her head in the chair.

Lennox walked up to her in his quiet, self-contained manner, and, putting his hand on her shoulder, said,—

"Bessie, poor child, will you do something for me to-morrow?"

"Yes, Fred, anything."

"Well, it is a simple thing, a little thing: will you drive over to Mrs. Waring's and tell her"—as she waited for the ending of the sentence Bessie's heart stood still—"that you are going to

be the very best wife in the world, and that I am resigned to the princess. You, Bessie, cannot expect me to forget the bitterness of years in a moment. It is hard for a man to be nothing, or even second, where he has the right to be first and all."

"Fred dear, you are very generous, but as you have the right on your side you can afford to be. I have not wished or intended to do wrong. I can only confess to being disappointed and unreasonable and being thrown back on myself. I did not expect or wish to find you a man whom I could make my obedient slave, neither did I expect you to rule me."

She hesitated for words and self-control.

"I had only hoped to be very necessary to you, as I had been to but two people in the world. You would not let me, and I was too proud and obstinate to try very long. As I grew older I wanted some one, strong and good, to lean upon, and yet——"

"And yet?"

"Well, when I found an oak I think that I was angry because the bark was a little rough, and it bore acorns instead of violets."

After this she broke down again, and it was some moments before she could control her agitation.

As Lennox looked at her he thought he loved her more than he ever had, more than he had when he was so quickly and lightly captivated under the old elms at Carrington. He put his arm around her and said, gently,—

“I am satisfied that it will all come out right, but we must have a little patience. We are through with ghosts and explanations forever. Now go up-stairs and rest. To-morrow the world will look brighter, brighter perhaps to us both, than it has for a long time.”

While Bessie rested with mind and conscience relieved, Lennox pondered long and deeply, how it was possible for two intelligent beings to work so long and so persistently at cross-purposes when a few words would have made all things clear.

Not long after this reconciliation Mr. and Mrs. Lennox were bidden to Tom Campbell's wedding. He and Miss Huston were to be married in Troy. Mr. Arthur, the Worthingtons, his own parents, and many old friends were to be there to give him

a good "send-off," and of course "Miss Bessie" must come.

Bessie was learning her lesson, and insisted that her husband should go with her. He, when he found it really was her pleasure, consented at once. After much puzzling she decided upon a wedding-gift. A very pretty model in silver of a birch-bark canoe. It held a little silver paddle, the handle of which terminated in a sharp point. On the bow of this little craft was a plain space left for the initials of the bride, but instead was engraved "The Mist," and when the gift was received by the pretty young bride it held a fine cargo of Spanish olives.

The reunion at the wedding was a pleasant one, though all had in mind that one who was missing to complete the old party, and at the breakfast when "absent friends" were toasted (and how young we have all begun to drink to that sad toast!), Mrs. Worthington and Bessie looked persistently in their plates till they had a chance, unobserved, to wipe their eyes.

Arthur was happy at the very evident improvement in his friend's life, and Tom was radiant over his own prosperity.

After it was all over Lennox said to Bessie, meditatively,—

“How happy young Campbell seems to be!”

“Yes,” answered Bessie, “he should be. His wife has no *arrière pensée*. It is a matter of first love on both sides.”

“I do not see that an *arrière pensée* is so very bad in a woman after all.”

“Do you really mean that, Fred?”

“I really do.”

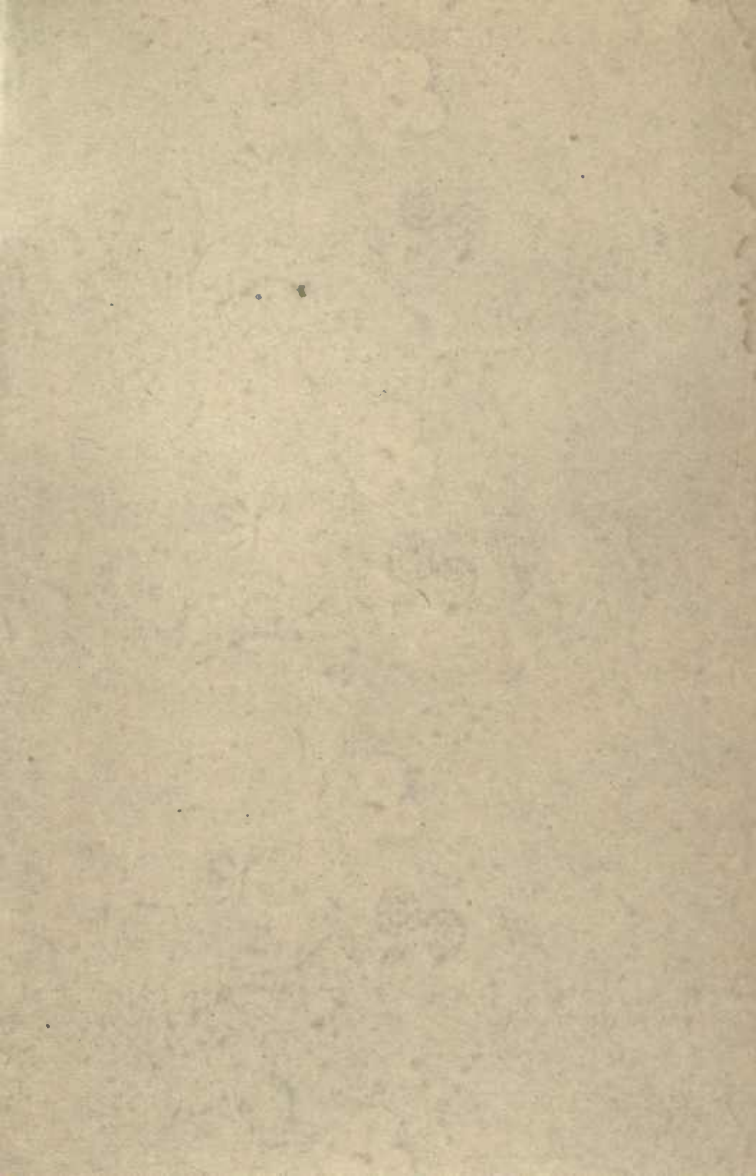
“I am very happy then, and I think I could forgive a man his first love, even if she were young and beautiful, if——”

“If what?”

“If he made up by being very devoted to me forever afterwards, and allowing me to be very devoted to him.”

“Bessie, this being in love is very mysterious. No one knows where or what it will lead to.”

“Yes. ‘*Ce que l’amour commence, ne peut être achevé que par Dieu !*’ ”





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